













# Invisible Hands

By F. Von Zobeltitz.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

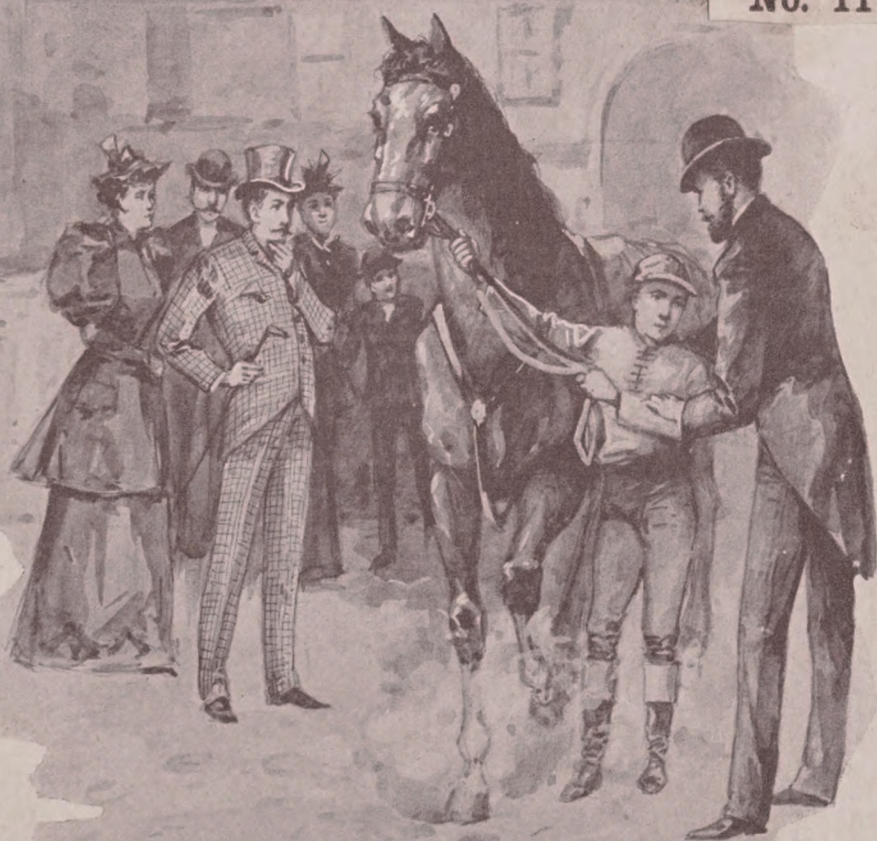
S. E. BOGGS,

Translator of "The Little Countess," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES FAGAN.

Ledger Library.

No. 115.



# THE POPULAR SERIES.

NO. AND TITLE.

AUTHOR.

PAPER COVER

1—THE OUTCAST OF MILAN.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25 cts.
2—ROLLO OF NORMANDY.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
3—MART SATTERLEE AMONG THE INDIANS.....	William O. Stoddard.....	25
4—KIT CARSON'S LAST TRAIL.....	Leon Lewis.....	25
5—THE SCOURGE OF DAMASCUS.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
6—THE GREAT KENTON FEUD.....	Capt. Frederick Whittaker.....	25
7—LUKE HAMMOND THE MISER.....	Prof. Wm. Henry Peck.....	25
8—THE CONSPIRATOR OF CORDOVA.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
9—THE FORTUNES OF CONRAD.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
10—DIAMOND SEEKER OF BRAZIL.....	Leon Lewis.....	25
11—THE ROBBER COUNTESS.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
12—BEL RUBIO.....	Capt. Frederick Whittaker.....	25
13—THE ROYAL OUTLAW.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
14—THE BANDIT OF SYRACUSE.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
15—RODERICK OF KILDARE.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
16—THE SERF LOVERS OF SIBERIA.....	Leon Lewis.....	25
17—KARL THE LION.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
18—THE YOUNG CASTAWAYS.....	Leon Lewis.....	25
19—THE CALIPH OF BAGDAD.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
20—THE SPECTRE'S SECRET.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
21—THE KNIGHT'S MOTTO.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
22—ALARIC, or THE TYRANT'S VAULT.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
23—THE STOLEN VAIL and THE UNSIGNED WILL.....	E. Werner.....	25
24—THE EXECUTIONER OF VENICE.....	Prof. Wm. Henry Peck.....	25
25—JOSEPHINE'S HEART.....	Reinhold Ortmann.....	25
26—THE BLACK TIGER.....	Capt. Frederick Whittaker.....	25
27—THESEUS; HERO OF ATTICA.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
28—THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
29—FLORABEL'S LOVER.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	25
30—IONE.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	25
31—PARTED AT THE ALTAR.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	25
32—CRIS ROCK.....	Capt. Mayne Reid.....	25
33—MAUD MORTON.....	Major Alfred R. Calhoun.....	25
34—PARTED BY FATE.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	25
35—UNDER A CLOUD.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	25
36—A MAD BETROTHAL.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	25
37—JOHN WINTHROP'S DEFEAT.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	25
38—LADY KILDARE.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	25
39—A LEAP IN THE DARK.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	25
40—THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	25
41—THE STONE-CUTTER OF LISBON.....	Prof. Wm. Henry Peck.....	25
42—THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	25
43—REUNITED.....	Popular Southern Author.....	25
44—A LOVE MATCH.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	25
45—MRS. HAROLD STAGG.....	Robert Grant.....	25
46—BRETA'S DOUBLE and A MEMORY.....	H. V. Greyson and Werner.....	25
47—THE BEADS OF TASMER.....	Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.....	25

For sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers, or sent post-paid on receipt of price by

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,

PUBLISHERS,

Cor. William and Spruce Streets, New York City.

**"The Wholesome Educator of Millions."**

---

# **1894**

## **Semi-Centennial Volume**

---

### **THE NEW YORK LEDGER**

---

**For Fifty Years the Leading Illustrated National Family  
Weekly Paper of America.**

#### **CONTRIBUTORS OF THE "LEDGER :"**

The following gives only a partial list of the distinguished writers who will contribute to the *Ledger* during 1894 :

Edward Everett Hale,  
Mrs. Ballington Booth,  
George Kennan,  
Mary Lowe Dickinson,  
Hjalmar H. Boyeson,  
Helen Campbell,  
John Habberton,  
Washington Gladden, D. D.,  
Mrs. M. A. Kidder,  
Eben E. Rexford,  
Elizabeth Olmis,  
E. A. Robinson,

Hon. James Bryce,  
Olive Thorne Miller,  
Mary Kyle Dallas,  
Mrs. N. S. Stowell,  
Theodore Roosevelt,  
Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth,  
S. P. Cadman,  
Hon. Thomas Dunn English,  
E. Werner,  
Helen V. Greyson,  
Dr. Charles C. Abbott,  
Prof. Felix L. Oswald.

---

**A Four-Dollar Paper for Only TWO Dollars.**

---

Our Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and Fourth-of-July Numbers, with beautifully illuminated covers, will be sent without extra charge to all our subscribers.

**SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, \$2 A YEAR.**

*Free Specimen Copies on Application.*

**ROBERT BONNER'S SONS, Publishers,**  
Cor. William and Spruce Sts., New York.

**An Attractive Novel.**

# HER LITTLE HIGHNESS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

NATALY VON ESCHSTRUTH,

*Author of "A Priestess of Comedy," "Countess Dynar,"  
"A Princess of the Stage," etc., etc.*

BY

ELISE L. LATHROP.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

12mo. 303 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

"Her Little Highness" is Baroness Eschstruth's latest book and one of the most charming novels that has come from her pen. The little princess, who is the heroine of the story, is the heir of a ducal throne, which in Germany makes her a being apart from the rest of the world, which tends to heighten the piquancy of a being so very human and so very natural. Her little highness is a little woman from the top of her head to the tips of her toes, and her love of Valleral, a gay and frolicsome courtier, is the most natural thing in the world. However unsuitable for the husband of a princess Valleral may be, the reader of the novel will enjoy the situation that the love affair creates. Valleral is a widower, with a son almost as old as the princess, and as sober as the father is frivolous. The little princess's fate is bound up with these two, and we could not detail all the complications in their relations without depriving the reader of the pleasure of following out for himself a most interesting love story.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,

COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

An Attractive Novel

HER LITTLE HIGHNESS

ON EIGHTH

CHAPTER

CHAPTER

# INVISIBLE HANDS.



# INVISIBLE HANDS.

A Novel.

AFTER THE GERMAN OF  
F. VON ZOBELTITZ,

BY

S. E. BOGGS,

Translator of "*The Little Countess*,"



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

265-20-Z

NEW YORK:

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,

PUBLISHERS.

THE LEDGER LIBRARY: ISSUED SEMI-MONTHLY. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, TWELVE DOLLARS PER ANNUM. NO. 111,  
JUNE 15, 1894. ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK, N. Y., POST OFFICE AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER.



PZ3  
Z71 I  
2

COPYRIGHT, 1894,

BY ROBERT BONNER'S SONS.

*(All rights reserved.)*



# INVISIBLE HANDS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### AT THE COUNSELOR'S.

“**W**HY so melancholy, Waldau? I have been observing you the entire evening—from the moment of your arrival at the hospitable house of our excellent host until now, and not once have I detected a smile on your countenance. What in the world is the matter with you?”

The young man to whom these words were addressed returned the coffee cup he had just emptied to the tray on the table, and rested his feet on the reticulated fender, above which waved the pale-blue and sulphur-hued flames of a coal fire. For one instant the deep line between his brows buried itself still deeper, while around his lips, which were shaded by a blonde mustache, played a smile that had in it more of bitterness than mirth.

“You are mistaken, my dear Menken,” he returned, without lifting his gaze from the glowing coals. “I am neither melancholy nor morose.”

"If I am, then it is the first time I have made a mistake in reading your countenance," responded his friend. "In the three years of our pleasant friendship, I have learned to know you—better than you think. That furrow between your brows, the restlessness which drives you now here, now there, the expression in your eyes, the convulsive twitching of your lips—these are sufficient evidence that all is not as it should be. There's no use trying to deceive me, Waldau. You can't do it."

"I'm not trying to do anything of the sort," retorted Waldau. "It would not be worth while. Nevertheless"—here his tone plainly betrayed his irritation—"I find it singular enough that you persist in annoying me a whole evening with questions, when you certainly must see that I am not inclined to give you an explanation which will satisfy you."

"Oh, that is the light in which you look upon my friendly interest, is it?" exclaimed Herr von Menken, elevating his brows. "I had an idea you knew me better. Surely I have given you ample proof of my disinterested friendship. You are a changed person in the last weeks; you have become almost a stranger to me—act, indeed, as if you wished me to look upon you as such. Very good! I shall try to endure the pain of such a breach. I only hope the task may prove an easier one for you, my boy."

The baron closed his eyes and drummed mechanically on the *chapeau-claque* which rested on his knees, while a sorrowful expression crept about his closely shaven lips.

Waldau saw the sadness in his friend's face, but was not softened by it. He raised himself slightly from his half-recumbent position in the easy-chair, and said, still in a resentful tone:

"You have said that more than once, Attokar, and I

have always assured you that you were mistaken. I do not want to break our friendship. Is there another soul but yourself in whom I, a poor, unfortunate beggar, could confide? Is it likely that I should want to break with the only person who cares for me? But I am only human, and have my moods like other mortals. Perhaps you would like to see always on my lips the stereotyped smile of the drawing-room dandy—always hear me utter the platitudes of those brainless fops? If so, you will be disappointed, for I am not equal to it. I am deeply indebted to you, Attokar, so deeply that I can never hope to repay a tithe of the favors you have showered upon me; but that I owe you every thought of my heart I will not admit—that is asking too much.”

Menken did not stir. He merely half opened his eyes, and sent a swift glance toward his friend; then he closed them again, observing quietly:

“There is no call for such vehemence, Elimar. Let us talk calmly, dispassionately. But first, let me beg you not to speak of your indebtedness to me. You owe me no gratitude. I forced my friendship on you. If I sought yours, it was because it gave pleasure to an old fellow like myself, and because I wanted to test the teaching of Hippocrates: That companionship with youth rejuvenates and preserves the mind of old age. You were once open-hearted and frank toward me, looking upon me as a father, or, shall I say, elder brother? You found in me a heart that understood you—until very lately. I have no wish to reproach you for your reserve, Elimar—God forbid! I only mean that your altered manner toward your old friend grieves him more than he can tell.”

Waldau was silent for several seconds, during which he stared moodily at the crackling fire. Then, with sudden emotion:

"Don't be angry, Attokar," he begged. "I dare say you are right. I am changed and don't know it—"

"Don't deceive yourself, Elimar," earnestly interrupted the baron, opening his eyes and letting them rest searchingly on the young man's pale, worn face. "You know very well what is troubling your heart, and—to be frank—I, too, am aware of it. You are in love."

A deep flush shot into the young man's cheeks. He crouched yet farther into his chair, like a frightened lad in whom a stern father has detected a fault.

"And suppose it were as you say?" he returned in a low, constrained voice. "Suppose I am in love—what then?"

Menken sighed unconsciously before replying, in his usual quiet manner:

"Then I should be sorry for you—"

A heavy footstep crossing the polished floor of the adjoining room interrupted him. A large, red hand brushed from the doorway the damask *portière*, the heavy folds of which modulated the lively chatter in the drawing-room to a gentle, murmuring sound.

"Well, well!" exclaimed a resounding bass voice. "Here are the deserters—toasting themselves by the fire, and gossiping as comfortably as if they owed no duty to the rest of the world! Veritably another Orestes and Pylades! I should feel inclined to pardon your desertion had you retired to this seclusion to enjoy a Havana; but you haven't touched the cigars. Waldau! Menken! What means such abstemiousness? By my word, I believe you are waiting for an example!" concluded their gigantic host, moving his stately *embonpoint* toward the little table in a window-recess, which bore on its ebony top the requisites for smoking.

The two friends had risen to their feet on his entrance.

"You must pardon our brief absence, my dear counselor," said Baron Menken, taking a cigar and lighting it. Then blowing a fragrant cloud slowly from his lips and nostrils, continued: "It was so very warm in the drawing-room—all owing to your matchless Marsala, counselor—that I feared a recurrence of my old trouble—congestion. The brief rest in this cosy gossip-corner has refreshed me. I am again at your service."

"Incredible!" growled the giant, puffing like an engine at his cigar. "I am afraid you are slandering my Marsala, baron. And you, Waldau, what ails you? Lieutenant Von Wedell says you are worrying because you committed the terrible blunder of treading on the tail of Fräulein Lassner's gown at the last reception. Assessor Pringsberg declares that you were served at Borchardt's three times in succession with corked Moët-Chandon. Whatever it is that troubles you, you must banish it from your heart. Come, as a punishment for running away from us, you must take your place at the piano and play my favorite '*Preished*.'"

The counselor, who added to his fondness for Russian pasties and sparkling Chablis, a passionate love of music, flung his cigar into the bronze ash-receiver, took Elimar under one arm and Menken under the other and marched with them to the drawing-room, where the entire company had assembled after dinner.

It was always more cheerful and merry in Counselor Dreyfuss's hospitable mansion than in most of the drawing-rooms frequented by his guests. This cheerfulness was due far more to the lively disposition of the host than to his wife, who was, however, an amiable, and not unsociable woman.

The counselor had laid the foundation of his considerable fortune during the campaign of 1866, and had managed his affairs with such discretion that, when the Franco-Prussian War ended, he was ranked among the millionaires of his fatherland. He was proud of his self-made wealth, and justly boasted that it had been honestly acquired. But that which gave him quite as much satisfaction as his gold, was his title, and the crown-order of the fourth class, both proud distinctions having been received through the distinguished influence of General Von Steinwitz, whom he had once had the honor of relieving from a disagreeable embarrassment.

Frau Theresa Dreyfuss had a personality of a peculiar order. It was said that she had formerly been the counselor's housekeeper before that worthy gentleman had bent his obstinate head to the matrimonial yoke, and there may have been some truth in the *on dit*. Few persons could remember hearing the good wife speak of anything save the mysteries of the kitchen, the pantry and the linen closet. She was the embodiment of matter exemplified by a figure as round as a ball, with a fresh, rosy-cheeked face that reminded one of the laughing full-moon.

Art and artists Frau Theresa tolerated with an indulgent silence. The only pictures which could win her favor were representations of "eatables"—such as are termed "still-life." Consequently the only artist, and there were several among the counselor's frequent guests, who had succeeded in ingratiating himself into the good graces of his hostess, was a young man whom Elimar Waldau had introduced to her. This young painter possessed a peculiar talent for portraying the aforementioned subjects, for which reason he had been dubbed by his fellow-craftsmen, "Still-Life Eugene."

Eugene Blenkner on frequent occasions, such as birth- and name-days and Christmas, had presented to his kind-hearted patroness marks of his respect and esteem. Now it was a neatly executed Dutch cheese, with a life-like fly buzzing around it; now a tray of oranges, with a champagne glass. In fact, Frau Theresa might be said to have on the walls of her own private sitting-room an artistic array of the contents of her larder.

There was a third person in the counselor's household—Annie Bürger, a niece, who had been adopted by the kind-hearted couple on the death of her parents.

As the counselor had no children of his own, Annie was his presumptive heir, and as such was surrounded by admirers. She was not what would be called handsome—rather plain, indeed, with a brusque, independent manner that would have offended many had it not been for the golden nimbus which encircled her.

When the counselor, with Waldau and Baron Menken, entered the drawing-room, the company had separated into groups. Several ladies, among them Frau Dreyfuss, in a burgundy-hued gown and powdered front, were taking their mocha at a table near the end of the room, and absorbed in discussing the possibility of improving the taste of anise patties by an ounce of cream of tartar.

A second group, composed of two officers of artillery, Lieutenants Von Wedell and Markwitz, Assessor Pringsberg and "Still-Life Eugene," were gathered in a window-recess where, in order to escape the ladies' glances, they might select a favorite *liqueur* from the tray, which Frederick, the butler, was presenting.

On the opposite side of the room from these convivially inclined gentlemen stood Lieutenant Doring, and Herr Rahlou, a journalist, engaged in a spirited

controversy with the counselor's niece, and Frau Hilgersdorf, a charming young widow.

"Here are the deserters!" announced the counselor, leading his captives into the middle of the room, and releasing them. "There, Herr Waldau, the piano is ready for you—may I have the pleasure!"

"You are very good, my dear counselor," laughingly returned Elimar, laying his hand on the giant's proffered arm. "I am afraid you will not be satisfied with my attempt to-day, I am not in a musical mood."

Waldau's musical education had been thorough, and he played as only he can play whose soul is in his performance. The tones he drew from the instrument seemed to gush from his heart, as if he felt every one of them, as if they were part of his being. A slight flush rested on his usually pale face; a peculiar light, as if he were inspired, shone in his brown eyes.

While he was playing the company remained perfectly silent; only the counselor, who swung his massive head like a pendulum from right to left, occasionally gave utterance to an admiring:

"Incredible! Incredibly beautiful!"

All eyes rested on the performer, but in none was there such ardent sympathy as in Frau von Hilgersdorf's deep black orbs.

Enthusiastic applause greeted Elimar when he rose from the piano.

"That was heavenly! Many, many thanks!" exclaimed the counselor, crushing the young man's slender fingers in his huge palm.

While Elimar was receiving hearty thanks from the rest of the company—from all except Frau von Hilgersdorf, who remained aloof, and Frau Dreyfuss, who, on the conclusion of the music, had at once resumed her condemnation of the practice of adulterating milk

—Baron Menken approached the counselor, and drew him to one side.

"Where is Colonel Von Hackert?" he asked, in a careless tone, but with a certain anxious expression under his half-closed eyelids. "It is not often that he is missing from your hospitable board."

Herr Dreyfuss shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't ask me, my dear baron. Between ourselves, I find the colonel's behavior a trifle queer. I invited him, but he has not thought it worth while to send a reply—notwithstanding my 'R. S. V. P.' was written in distinct capitals—incredible, don't you think?"

Menken nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, it is very singular. It is to be hoped nothing has happened."

"Don't be a raven, baron! Don't croak, and fear the worst at once. I dare say that precious daughter of his has taken a cold, and must have some camomile tea, which papa, of course, must brew with his own hands. In any event he might have sent a regret."

The baron muttered an inarticulate reply into his tall white choker, and turned away. As he did so his eyes fell on a youthful pair who imagined themselves unseen behind the damask curtain which draped a bay-window. Annie Bürger and Lieutenant Doring had withdrawn to this retreat when Elimar Waldau began to play. It was only a fleeting glance which the baron caught through a rift in the curtain; but he saw that the two heads, Annie's brown curls and the lieutenant's blonde locks, were suspiciously close together; that the young officer's right hand clasped that of the counselor's niece. A smile played around the baron's lips as he passed onward toward the circle of elderly dames around the coffee-urn.

"Another pair of lovers," he muttered. "Another

happy pair ! But you will have to fight for your bride, my blonde young warrior ! I know the counselor well, and I know that he counts on exchanging his money-bags for a baronet's crown at the very least, while you have only your iron cross to offer."

The four gentlemen in the window-recess, whose attention was concentrated anew on the *liqueur* casket, resumed their conversation when the music ceased.

"That fellow Waldau is a wonderfully gifted chap," observed Lieutenant Von Wedell. "There are few accomplishments he has not mastered. He dances like a sylph, plays piano like a virtuoso, paints like Apelles—"

"Have you ever seen any of his work?" interrupted "Still-Life Eugene," who could listen to anything but praises of his fellow-artist. "If you have, then you may be counted among the meager number who consider Waldau an artist. Did he not give out that he was one of us no one would know it."

"Beg pardon, my dear Herr Blenkner," here interposed Assessor Pringsberg. "You forget that Waldau received a gold medal two years ago at the art exhibition for his 'Vestal Virgin.' That he has as much right to call himself an artist as a dozen others who have not accomplished so much, simple justice must compel you to admit. Moreover, had his 'Virgin' not possessed some merit, it would not have found a purchaser so quickly."

"Humph ! And who was the purchaser?" retorted Blenkner, with a scornful laugh. "Baron Menken, Waldau's intimate friend—his shadow,\* his second self !"

"I must contradict you a second time, Blenkner," responded the assessor. "At that time Menken had not yet become acquainted with Waldau—neither per-

sonally nor by name. Only after he had become the owner of the 'Vestal' did he meet the painter of it."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" broke in Lieutenant Markwitz. "You are beginning another argument. You two never meet but you quarrel. Don't be so aggressive, Pringsberg, so volcanic. Your loud voice has attracted attention to our retreat. See, even Frau von Hilgersdorf's beautiful eyes are directed hitherward."

"That does not surprise me," observed Von Wedell, complacently stroking the down on his upper lip. "To be compelled to listen to Doctor Rahlou is certainly no agreeable task. The fellow is a personified double-leaded leader—"

"And his dark-eyed *vis-a-vis* the embodiment of one of Lenau's Hungarian sonnets," supplemented Pringsberg, sending an admiring glance toward the lady in question.

"She is a Hungarian by birth," I believe, said Markwitz.

"Yes, genuine Magyar blood," assented Pringsberg, who was always well-informed concerning the antecedents of the more prominent stars in the social firmament. "She was married at sixteen to General von Hilgersdorf, who was sixty. She is only twenty now, but looks ten years older—which makes her all the more charming."

"Has she any money?" inquired Markwitz, letting an interested glance rest on the fair widow.

"Oh, you prosaic creature!" laughingly exclaimed the assessor. "Can't you separate the base earthly from the godlike? It is said that she is very rich. I know that she owns the house in K—— Street, and a handsome villa at San Remo, where she spent the past two years, and where the old general died. Does that

content you? However, if you have any intention of paying court to the lovely widow, I should advise you to wait a few months. You see she is still in mourning."

"I dare say she wears black because it harmonizes so well with the shimmer of her hair, and the gleam in her eyes," remarked Blenkner. "The year of mourning is past, and—. But look at the counselor! What has happened, I wonder?"

Herr Dreyfuss was talking with Elimar Waldau when Frederick, the butler, approached him with a letter, and said in a low, apologetic tone:

"Beg pardon, counselor, but Augustus has just brought this note from Fräulein Von Hackert. The gracious Fräulein begs pardon for sending it at this late hour."

Dreyfuss took the note and hastily opened it; while Waldau, who could plainly see the delicate chirography, grew suddenly pallid and leaned heavily against the mantel.

The counselor read the few hastily written lines, a serious expression settling on his face.

"This is sad, very sad indeed!" he muttered. Then he stepped into the middle of the room and said aloud: "My friends, I have just received some very sorrowful news. I tell you because you are all acquainted with Colonel von Hackert. I invited the colonel to dine with us this evening, and was rather offended because he sent neither an acceptance nor a regret. Fräulein Lucia's note explains the trifling omission. She writes:" He polished his *pince-nez* before reading.

"MY DEAR COUNSELOR: Papa was taken ill day before yesterday. I hoped it might be merely a temporary attack, and therefore postponed sending an answer to your kind invitation. Unfortunately papa's condition became suddenly very serious,

and Doctor Goeschen fears the worst. Sorrow and excitement prevented me from writing earlier to you. I trust you will pardon the delay when you learn the cause.

“ ‘Very sincerely yours,

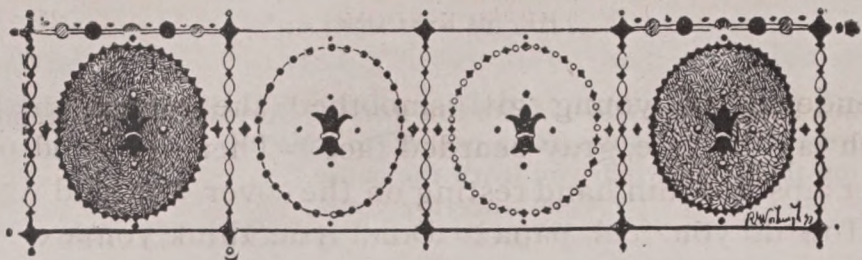
“ ‘LUCIA VON HACKERT-SELCHERN.’ ”

A sympathetic murmur rose from the company ; and while expressions of regret for the brave old soldier's illness were heard on all sides, Baron Menken approached his young friend, who was still leaning, deathly pale, against the mantel, and almost roughly grasped his arm.

A singular expression distorted the baron's features. His usually cold eyes gleamed with a strange fire, as he said in a hoarse whisper :

“ Don't be weak, Waldau. Compose yourself. It is not necessary that all the world should read your heart.”





## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SICK-ROOM.

Not a single ray of the bright winter sunshine penetrated through the heavy curtains which draped the corner windows on the second story of an imposing mansion in K—— Street. Within the room it was so dark that only the faint outlines of a large bed and the dark-robed figure sitting beside it could be seen.

“Lux, my darling—are you there?” asked a weak voice from the bed.

“Yes, dear papa, do you want anything?” replied a gentle tone as the dark-robed figure bent over the pillow.

“Open the curtains and let some light into the room,” commanded the invalid. “The sun must be shining; I feel it. Oh, how I long for sunshine and light!”

Lucia was already at one of the windows. She drew back the heavy curtains and rolled up the blind. Instantly the sick-room was flooded with dazzling light, and the sun, as if wishing to show his gratitude to the little hand which had admitted him, sent his full rays on the girlish form moving noiselessly back to the bedside.

Tenderly the young girl smoothed the pillow on which lay the pale, gray-bearded face. Then she lifted to her lips the thin hand resting on the cover, and said :

"How do you feel, papa? Don't you think you are stronger? You have been sleeping soundly for four hours."

The invalid turned his head toward her, and rested his dull eyes on her face.

"Thanks, my dearest, I am better—much better. I shall soon be well again— *Potztausend!* What a shaking up this rascally fever has given me! And that souvenir I got at Mars-la-Tour never lets me forget its presence in my old carcass. But I am a hardy old oak and can withstand many a hard blast. What is the news, dear heart?" he asked, after a pause. "These few days in bed have broken all communication with the outside world."

"The news, papa?" repeated Lucia, hesitatingly. "I am afraid you will have to wait a few days before I may read the papers to you. Doctor Goeschen has given strict orders that you are not to be excited, and I am well enough acquainted with my *papachen* to know how he would receive any news that might not meet his approval. The newspapers have been carefully preserved, and just so soon as the doctor gives me permission, you shall hear everything that has happened."

The invalid's hands moved restlessly over the blue-silk coverlet. A slight frown wrinkled his brow; but a good-natured chuckle was heard underneath the heavy mustache.

"You are a little goose, Lux. I tell you I am well—quite well again. Fetch the newspapers, dear, I want to know what has been going on in the world."

Lucia bent her face close to her father's and said coaxingly :

"If I beg it as a great favor, papa dear, won't you let politics alone for a few days longer? I will tell you something else that will interest you."

"Don't rouse my curiosity, Lux. What is it? Out with it!"

"You must first promise to be very, very calm."

"*Potztausend!* How calm do you want me to be? As rigid as a raw recruit after a three-weeks' drill?"

Lucia laughed gleefully, then said:

"Herr von Menken is in the sitting-room; he has been here six or seven times during your illness, and has waited over an hour to-day. He would like to see you, and find out for himself how you really are. Shall I let him come up to see you for a few minutes?"

"Menken, did you say?" exclaimed the invalid with animation. "The good fellow! Do I want to see my old comrade! Directly—at once—immediately! But not for a few minutes, Lux, for hours—as long as he will have the patience to stop in a sick-room."

"You must be careful, papa, very careful!" smilingly admonished his daughter. "Remember I am the colonel, and you the recruit who has to obey!"

She arranged the pillows, straightened the covers and placed a silver handbell on the little table beside the bed. Then she left the room, and in a few seconds was in the sitting-room.

Baron Menken was standing at the window looking out upon the animated scene in the street. He turned quickly on hearing Lucia's light step, and came toward her, exclaiming earnestly:

"He is better, isn't he, Fräulein Lucia?"

He extended his hand to take hers, but she evaded the greeting by an imperceptible movement.

"I am filled with impatience and uneasiness," he

continued, as if he had not noticed her refusal to shake hands with him. "Pray tell me, is the crisis past?"

"Thank God, yes!" replied Lucia. "We may now hope that he will soon be well again. He has slept several hours, and is much stronger. He is ready to receive you, but, Herr von Menken—" she paused, and looked pleadingly up into his face before adding: "you will not be offended if I ask you not to stop long with him?"

"Pray, my dear child," earnestly responded the baron, "don't imagine for a moment that your affectionate concern for your dear father could offend me. I understand very well that the colonel must be spared all excitement. I only want to see him for a few moments, to convince myself of his condition."

With a slight bow Lucia moved toward the door, and Menken followed. As his glance rested on the graceful form of his conductress, it seemed as if a thick veil had been suddenly removed from his steel-gray eyes. The weary, *blasé* expression usual to them vanished, and gave place to a gloomy passion. It was as if a dense mist had lifted suddenly from a blazing volcano.

"I am very glad to see you, old fellow!" exclaimed the colonel, in his weak tones, extending a trembling hand in greeting, when the baron entered the room. "I knew you wouldn't desert an old comrade as all the rest have done! Come, sit here by me—your hand—God bless you!"

The baron's eyes rested searchingly on the invalid's face, and the sensation he experienced when he noted the sunken cheeks with their hectic color was not one of hopefulness.

"I am delighted to find that you are not as ill as that croaker, Doctor Goeschen, has been trying to make me believe," he forced himself to say, in a jesting tone, as

he seated himself in Lucia's chair. "We all hope you will soon be on your legs again "

The colonel slowly shook his head, and the smile faded from his lips. He looked cautiously around to convince himself that they were alone before answering in a whisper :

"I am afraid not, Attokar. The end is approaching. I feel it, here—here, where that Frenchman's bullet tore its way into my lung. The doctors believed they had patched me up all right, but they were mistaken. Yes, my dear friend, the end is near, and I shall go gladly, with the knowledge that I got my death-wound while defending the Fatherland. Surely that is nobler than to die of a miserable influenza ! And I am weary of life, too," he added, with a sigh. "Yes, indeed, Attokar, I am tired of it all ! I have had my share of happiness, and of sorrow. The only thing that weighs upon my heart is Lucia's future."

Menken's eyelids drooped over the pupils. He was an admirable actor, and was versed in the art of disguising his feelings ; but it would have been impossible, at that moment, to meet the invalid's earnest gaze. He felt certain that the colonel must read in his eager eyes the chief object of his frequent visits during the past weeks.

"You, Attokar," resumed the invalid, "are the only one to whom I confided the secret of my darling's birth, when I lay at death's door in the hospital at Coblenz. Had you not come to see me to-day, I should have sent a messenger for you to-morrow, for I want to consult you about Lux—about destroying everything that could possibly lead to a discovery of the secret."

Menken's head was bent. He was toying nervously with the glove he had drawn from his right hand.

"Don't you think you give yourself more trouble than is necessary concerning that secret, my dear Karl?" he said, in a low tone. "So far as I can recall the story you told me, there need be no fear of discovery."

"Yes, yes, there is!" excitedly responded the colonel, a deeper flush burning on his cheeks. "I have not, since that day, mentioned the subject to you, but since then—since then—" Here he drew a long breath that came with difficulty from his tortured lung. "I have had cause to fear that the secret would become known. Carmella Boccani is dead. The letter which brought me the information was the end of a noose that has been gradually drawing tighter about my throat! Carmella did not keep her promise, but confided, before her death, the secret to her son, a young rascal. Can't you guess the consequences, Menken?"

The baron nodded. His brows were drawn, a very serious expression rested on his grave face.

"The villain has been threatening you?" he returned. "Did you answer any of his letters?"

"Not until his demands became too shameless," answered the colonel, whose voice was growing weaker. Then I wrote that I should pay no further attention to his appeals, that I looked upon his threats as the raving of a madman."

"That was imprudent, Karl," observed the baron. "You would better have remained silent. You satisfied Carmella's demands and released yourself from further obligation. Why should you trouble yourself about her son's idle threats? I fancy he would find it rather difficult to prove his assertions."

"So I thought until I received Francisco's—that is the rascal's name—last letter. He speaks of a witness who is familiar with the whole affair, and whose word

would be sufficient in any court. He assured me that if I did not at once send him three thousand francs he should lay the case in the hands of an attorney. It was the sixth or seventh demand of a like character. What will it lead to, do you imagine?"

Menken deliberated a moment; then he asked:

"Did Carmella Boccani ever receive any letters from you?"

"My dear Menken! What a question!" feebly ejaculated the invalid. "No, she never received a written word from me; the affair was conducted verbally. The only other person beside yourself who could have known anything about it was Hilgersdorf; and that he never mentioned it I am confident, for, though he was an inveterate gossip, he would not have dared to betray me. You understand? I refer to that eventful evening at Saint-Estain."

Herr von Menken nodded. "I have come to the conclusion," he observed thoughtfully, "that your Francisco has invented the story of the witness. It is not so difficult to find, in the land of the orange, a false witness who would swear to a villainy as it is in our more matter-of-fact country. I am acquainted with Italy and its social conditions. It is to be hoped you refused to give the rascal that last three thousand francs?"

"Unfortunately I did not. The fellow's boldness made me uneasy. I sent the money through Goldberger."

"I am sorry for that! Three thousand francs would have done a deal of good among the deserving poor. However, it can't be helped now. Have you kept the epistles you received from this Francisco?"

"They are in my desk, together with those papers of which I told you not long ago, and which I want you to take charge of. I was careless not to destroy the fel-

low's letters. They must not fall into any strange hands. If my strength holds out I shall burn them before nightfall."

"You are right," assented the baron. "Not a soul must even suspect the existence of such documents. One more question, Karl—you will pardon me, for you know why I ask it. Have you made your will?"

"Certainly. Long ago. For years I have carried in my breast the threat of death, and was obliged to be cautious. My will is written, and properly witnessed, and safe with my solicitor. Herbert, my frivolous nephew, who has all his life been more trouble than pleasure to me, will receive the interest of twenty thousand dollars until he marries, when he receives the principal. I want to prevent him from squandering the money in six months, which he would certainly do were he to receive the sum at my death. Augustus, my faithful old servant, who drew me from under my horse at Mars-la-Tour, and Johanna, my housekeeper, are substantially remembered; everything else goes to my darling."

"A wise distribution, Karl. You could not have done better. The only thing, then, that worries you is this Francisco Boccani?"

"Yes, and"—the invalid's pallid face was o'er-shadowed by inexpressible melancholy—"the fate of my poor lonely little Lux. What will become of the child when I am gone? She will be alone, quite alone in the world."

Menken laid his hand for an instant over his eyes; then passed it slowly across his pale, rigid features.

"Do—do you forget that I shall be here, Karl?" he asked in a low tone, speaking with difficulty. "Although I could never hope to replace the loss of her father, I can and will be her true friend. Or, can't you

trust me with your treasure? Don't you believe I have fully repented of my first sins?"

The colonel laid his cold hand on that of his friend.

"Attokar, you and I have more than once faced death together—those days before Weissenberg and Vionville were the bloody witnesses of our friendship. In those days of danger and death I learned to know you as the bravest of soldiers, the most honest of men, the faithfulest comrade and the truest of friends. Even your frank confession after that Saint-Estain affair could not shake my faith in you. I honor and respect you. Attokar, do you think I could have trusted you as I have did I not?"

The baron's head sunk lower, he breathed heavily, and his words came in gasps from his lips :

"Thank you—Karl—thank you! You cannot—guess how your trust—your friendship comforts me—gives me hope. Yes, hope and courage—courage to tell you my secret. Listen—I trust my story will not weary you, Karl, but you must hear me—" He moved his chair so that his strangely altered countenance should be in shadow, and began—

Lucia, who was busied about some household duties in a room not far distant, suddenly heard a muffled cry. The next instant the bell in the sick-room rang sharply, a door was hastily opened, and Baron Menken's voice called Augustus. Pale as death, her heart oppressed by a sickening dread, Lucia darted to her father's room. One glance told her all! With a piercing cry of anguish she flung herself on her knees beside the bed on which lay the dying soldier, the blood gushing from his lips. On the opposite side of the bed stood Baron Menken, his tall form bowed, his face that of an aged man, his clasped hands pressed convulsively against his breast.



### CHAPTER III.

#### VARIOUS CONTRASTS.

It was still early in the forenoon, yet there was considerable stir in the courtyard of the artillery barracks. In one corner a company of soldiers, in rimless caps and long cloaks—for the day was very cold—was gathered about a cannon, listening with respectful attention to the wisdom which fell from the lips of a grizzly-mustached sergeant. A subaltern, at a little distance apart, was exercising a party of recruits.

On the opposite side of the court a young officer was critically watching a squad of volunteers riding. At that moment a corporal approached the officer and handed him a visiting card.

“The gentleman is waiting, lieutenant,” he announced, saluting respectfully. “He would like to speak to the lieutenant a moment.”

The officer cast a fleeting glance at the pasteboard :  
“‘Herbert von Hackert-Selchern, *stud. jur.*,’” he read. “Hum !” he muttered with a puzzled air ; then, as if suddenly remembering, he added : “Hackert, ah, yes ! Now, where in the world does he come from ?

"Tell the gentleman," he said aloud, "that I will see him in a few moments."

At the entrance to the exercise-ground, a young man paced leisurely to and fro. He was a tall, broad-shouldered athlete, with a fresh-complexioned face that was marked by the crimson streaks of a half-dozen healed rapier cuts. His clothes were of the latest mode, and were worn with the air of a man of fashion. A heavy ebony stick, with an elaborately carved head swung from his gloved right hand.

"My dear Doring, how do you do?" he exclaimed, when the lieutenant came toward him. "It is a deuced long time since I saw you!" he added, cordially shaking the young officer's extended hand. "Twelve years or more, isn't it? It was just before your promotion, don't you remember? I wore a simple cadet's jacket then, and coveted your epaulettes not a little. There have been many changes since that time."

Lieutenant Doring, a trifle nonplused, twirled his blonde mustache and surveyed the speaker, unable to reconcile harmoniously the image of the immature lad remembered with this fashionably clad giant.

"I should not have recognized you, Hackert, had not your card assisted my memory," he said. "You have grown to such a height. Why, you have become a veritable Cyclops—a Roland!"

Herr Von Hackert laughed, and swung his stick in the air.

"All the result of proper nourishment, Doring!" he responded. "If you swallow daily from fifteen to twenty mugs of Lichtenhainer, between times a few bottles of Moët-Chandon and eat only beefsteaks, you, too, will become a Polyphemus—I swear it! I tell you, Doring, the life of a student is much to be preferred to that of a soldier. You know, don't you, that I've dis-

carded the soldier's jacket for good and all? I managed to get as far as ensign, had the debts of a major, and no one to pay them for me. I broke a billiard cue over the head of an impertinent waiter in the restaurant frequented by my superiors; and tied a night-watchman, who presumed to insult me at three o'clock in the morning, to a lamp-post. I had to do it, I swear, Doring, else the fellow would have arrested me. The colonel gave me a lecture, and called my behavior boy's tricks, and that I couldn't stand. I told him so, too, and—well, that put a sudden end to all my plans for promotion to the field-marshal's staff, and I quit!"

Doring could not help but laugh at this recital, although he did not sympathize with the speaker. He was of too serious a nature to admire the levity of the student.

"And so you have abjured all tactics and strategy and now devote yourself solely to the pandect?" he said.

Hackert elevated his eyebrows and grimaced.

"Between ourselves, my dear Doring, the *corpus juris* is not entirely to my liking. The life of a student is jolly, the studies frightfully dull! Fortunately, the hours one is obliged to devote to them are few—and it is well they are! A fellow wouldn't have time for them else. As it is, there are only a few hours left for sleep. But I have come to the conclusion to change my mode of life. Think I'll remove from Heidelberg, where the very atmosphere is crowded with wine-shop reminiscences, and settle down in Berlin, and become a solid citizen."

"Then you don't mean to stop here just yet?" inquired Doring.

"I can't say, at least, not yet; I came to attend my uncle's funeral."

"What!" ejaculated the lieutenant, starting. "Is the colonel dead? I did not know it. I have been out of town three days, and returned only last night. How very sorry I am! Such a brave, honest, kind-hearted man! When is the funeral?"

"This afternoon at three; he will be buried in the Jerusalem cemetery," answered Hackert.

"I am glad I heard of it in time. I shall not fail to pay the last honors to the brave old soldier. Did you arrive before he died?"

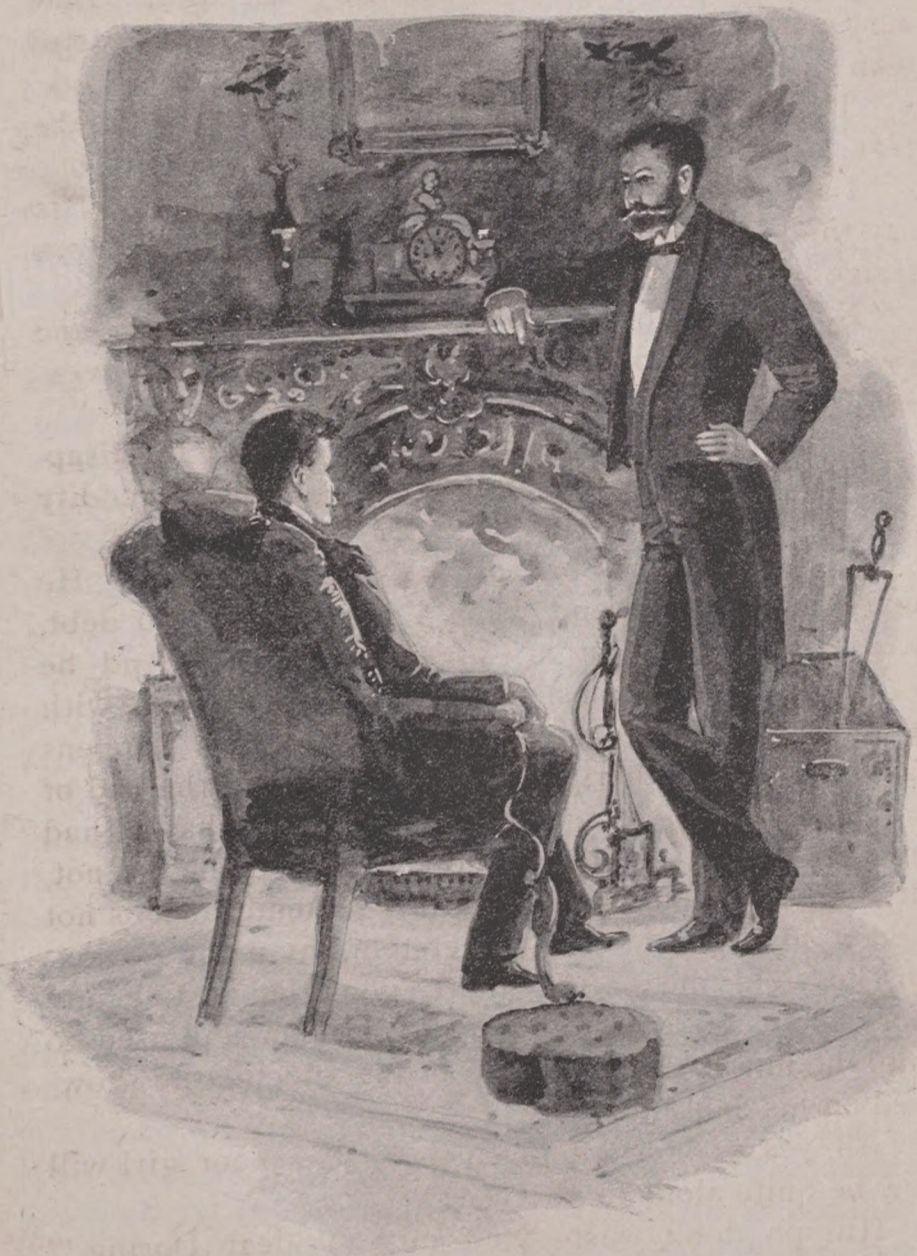
"No; I was notified by telegraph of his death, and came on here at once—missing a jolly party that evening."

The lieutenant's face so plainly betrayed his disapproval of this speech, that Hackert hastened to modify it by adding:

"The colonel was one of the best of uncles. He never failed to respond when I got myself into debt, which was pretty often, I must confess! And he wasn't like some uncles, who always send a lecture with their checks. He merely wrote: 'If this happens again I shall disinherit you!'—and that was the end of it. I confess I was a trifle apprehensive that he had kept his word, but, thank my good angel, he did not, although the mode of testamentary remembrance is not a bit to my liking. Old Wallerstein, my uncle's solicitor, has told me— But there, don't let us talk any more about it. I was fond of the old man, and used to think he might give me some of the affection he showered on his daughter."

"Ah, yes, poor Fräulein Lucia! The poor girl will now be quite alone in the world."

"Humph, don't waste your pity, my dear Doring!" with something of a sneer retorted the student. "Lucia is one of those self-sufficient persons who don't require



"WHY SO MELANCHOLY, WALDAU?"—See Page 7.



companionship and sympathy. One of these days she will marry—and I don't envy the beggar she will elect to honor by her preference. Ugh-h-h, I shiver with cold whenever I look into her black eyes ! And yet, one hundred thousand thalers—thalers, not marks, mind you, my dear fellow !—ought to possess enough caloric to counteract the ice in her nature. But I must not detain you any longer. I came to invite you to dine with me at the Hillers. Don't refuse ; remember you are among the first of my old friends I have looked up."

"You are very kind, Hackert," returned the lieutenant, "but unfortunately I cannot accept your invitation. I shall be engaged here until after two, and I want to be at the cemetery before three. Some other time we will arrange for a dinner. I am glad you looked me up, and regret that I had to receive you in the barracks yard."

"Don't mention it ; every one according to his vocation," laughingly responded the student. "My reception-room is the wine-shop—my greeting a toast ! *Au revoir.*"

The lieutenant returned to the exercise-ground, and Hackert, swinging his stick and humming an air from the "*Fledermaus*," sauntered toward the cab which was waiting for him.

When Lieutenant Doring, at the conclusion of the riding lesson, entered his comfortable apartments in the barracks, he found there two letters, one from Counselor Dreyfuss, the other from Baron Menken. Each contained a brief announcement of Colonel von Hackert's death and the hour of the funeral. The counselor's epistle, however, seemed to possess a peculiar interest for the young soldier ; he stepped to the window and closely scrutinized the envelope. A smile passed over his grave, handsome face ; he had found what he

sought : only a faint, almost imperceptible mark in the left hand corner of the envelope, but it was evidently satisfactory. He returned to the writing-table, lighted a wax-taper and held the envelope over the flame. Directly there appeared the message in pale-blue characters : "A thousand greetings from Annie." Doring pressed his lips to the envelope, then held it in the the flame of the candle until it had burned to ashes.

When Lieutenant Doring arrived at the hall in which the funeral ceremonies for the dead warrior were to be held, he found the spacious chamber already crowded. Colonel von Hackert-Selchern had occupied a prominent position in Berlin society ; and had won, wherever he went, the respect and admiration of his associates ; consequently, the number of persons who came to pay their last respects to the deceased hero was large.

The casket and bier were covered with garlands and flowers, the dead soldier's orders, his two iron crosses and the saber, which had had its blade broken at Mars-la-Lour, rested on a cushion of snowy azaleas at the head of the bier.

Close by the side of the garrison chaplain, a white-haired old man, whose tones betrayed his emotion, stood the colonel's daughter Lucia, looking, in her somber garments, with pallid face and deeply shadowed eyes, like a sorrowing Niobe who has lost all she held dear on earth. But not even in this moment of extreme anguish had her pride deserted her. She had gently but firmly refused the arm General Von Steinetz, an old comrade of her father's, had offered for her support, and stood proudly upright, with only the deep despair in her countenance betraying the torturing anguish of her soul.

Behind her towered the stately and distinguished form of Baron von Menken. To-day the baron wore

the captain's uniform, in which he had ridden, ten years before, across the Rhine. The simple cuirassier's jacket rendered still more conspicuous his athletic proportions, and contrasted strangely with the grave, passionless features, which would have better suited a gold-embroidered chamberlain-robe. There was a look of suffering in the baron's face, or was it only the pale glimmer which fell on it from the green window-shades that gave the ashen hue to his cheeks?

Against one of the pillars which supported the arched roof leaned Elimar Waldau, his slender form wrapped in a costly fur cloak, almost hidden behind a half-dozen glittering uniforms. So intent was the young artist upon the touching words which fell from the chaplain's lips that he did not see the burning glances which were directed toward him from a pair of lovely dark eyes. Frau Von Hilgersdorf, who was even more bewitching than usual in her black gown, with its glittering jet ornaments, occupied a position on the opposite side of the hall from Waldau; and a close observer might easily have seen that her thoughts were not with the solemn ceremonies. Counselor Dreyfuss with his wife and niece was also present, as were Lieutenants Markwitz and Von Wedell, Doctor Rahlau and "Still-Life Eugene." These gentlemen, to-day, were hardly recognizable, with their down-cast eyes and serious countenances.

At the conclusion of the clergyman's address, six sturdy Ulans raised the coffin from the bier, the garrison band softly played: "*Wie sie so sanft ruhen*," and the funeral procession was set in motion.

At this moment Lucia, who had felt that her strength was gradually failing her, uttered a low moaning cry, and sank, half unconscious, to the stone floor. Baron von Menken was the first to reach her. She opened

her eyes as he bent over to raise her in his arms, and the glance which met his was so filled with abhorrence that he stepped back involuntarily. Others now came forward ; Elimar Waldau sought to break his way to the side of the fainting girl, but Menken's iron grasp caught his arm.

"Let me go !" whispered Elimar, struggling to release himself, but the baron held him fast, and drew him towards the door.

Lucia was carried to her carriage ; Frau Von Sporken, a near relative of General Von Steinetz, took her place beside her ; then the carriage rolled away.

A few minutes later three salvos from a company of rifles reverberated through the cemetery ; the grave had closed over the old warrior, and above the snow-mantled earth hung a gray smoke-curtain, like that which had enveloped the battle-fields on which the deceased hero had bravely fought and conquered. The salvo was a last greeting from old comrades.

The assembled company dispersed gradually. The long line of carriages waiting at the cemetery gates was broken. Those who had come on foot sauntered slowly in small groups toward the city.

Lieutenant Doring was hastening to join the counselor's party, when his arm was unceremoniously seized by Herbert von Hackert, who drew him toward a carriage, exclaiming :

"Come, you are not going to escape me this time, my dear fellow. It is so savagely cold that we must have a bowl of grog to prevent the congelation of the blood in our veins ! Coachman, to the *café* Belle-Alliance, and in double-quick time, too, do you hear ? Now, my dear Doring—" taking his seat beside the lieutenant, and crushing the unaccustomed "stove-pipe" more firmly on his head—"now we can enjoy an old-

fashioned chat! I must confess I am glad the ceremony is over. Funerals always make me feel sort of mournful."

"I don't know why you shouldn't feel so in this case," a trifle pointedly, responded the lieutenant, who was annoyed by Hackert's levity. "The man whom we have just laid to rest was a near relation, and, moreover, a man to whom—as you have frankly acknowledged—you are deeply indebted for many favors."

"Oh, come now, Doring, you misunderstand me; I swear! Of course, I am sorry that the old boy is dead and all that! What I meant was I always feel so uncomfortable at a funeral. It isn't pleasant, now is it, to have several hundred people gaping at you? Now there is my cousin Lucia—she's a wonderful girl. Would you believe that she herself made all the arrangements for the funeral? Had to, in fact, because old Frau Von Sporken, who is staying with her, has a mind just like her body, a round nought. In addition to the hundred and one incidents consequent upon the death of my uncle, was one that certainly did not serve to strengthen Lucia's energy. I heard of the affair only this morning, or I should have gone at once to offer my services to the poor girl. The night my uncle died there was a burglary committed in the house."

"A burglary!" interrupted Doring, in a shocked voice. "How dreadful! How much was stolen?"

"Nothing, or rather they have not yet discovered that anything has been taken, and that is what makes the affair so mysterious. I should consider it a bad joke, had not Wallerstein, the solicitor, assured me that the safe had been opened secretly. You know, perhaps, that the safe is in my uncle's study? He, as I have reason to know, was always extremely careful of his money, and always kept it in the vaults of the bank.

Therefore, the iron walls of the safe in the study enclosed only a few thousand marks, which would have been worth taking at any rate, but the money was not touched. The morning after my uncle's death, the safe was found open, but nothing seemed to have been disturbed."

"That is very singular!" observed Doring. "Very remarkable indeed! Do they know how much money was in the safe before it was opened?"

"To a penny! Lucia said her father always made it a point to mark the amount he put into the safe on a slip of paper, which he pasted on the inside of the door, and this slip was there as usual."

"Then the inference must be that the thief was after something beside money. Have they any suspicion?"

"None whatever! All the servants are honest folk, who have been for years in my uncle's service. And yet the thief—he can hardly be called that, however—was familiar with the locality. How he got into the study through my uncle's bedroom is a mystery, as there were people up in the room all night. I can imagine how frightened Lucia was the next morning when the discovery was made. As nothing of value was taken, my cousin thinks it best to keep the affair a secret; but the solicitor informed the police, and I dare say they will ferret some explanation of the riddle. But, here we are! Come, you shall learn what a delicious bowl of grog can be brewed here. I have tested its quality, and can swear to its excellence."





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ORPHAN.

Genuine March weather reigned in the streets of the Residenz. A gloomy sky, heavy with lowering clouds, hung above the roofs. The wind, which was cold and piercing, drove the mingled rain, sleet and snow against the window-panes of the breakfast-room in the Hackert mansion, which appeared all the more cheerful because of the unfriendly weather outside.

August, the butler, was busied stirring the coals in the open grate to a brighter blaze, the while exchanging jesting remarks with Johanna, who was arranging the breakfast-table. A sort of Platonic love affair had been going on for years between the two ; a love affair that manifested itself chiefly in mutual bantering and teasing. The merry war was again in progress this morning between the breakfast-table and the fireplace, and was carried on at so lively a pace that the combatants failed to notice the opening of the door. Only when their young mistress, leaning on Frau Von Sporken's arm, had crossed the threshold, did they become aware of the ladies' presence. Johanna bent her flaming face over the coffee-urn, while August sought to hide his confusion by removing hurriedly the plates

from place to place. Fortunately the singular behavior of the servants was not noticed by either of the ladies. Lucia was too weak, and Frau von Sporken too solicitous concerning the comfort of her young charge, who, one could see plainly, was recovering from a severe illness.

Frau Von Sporken, who had, at the request of her cousin, General Von Steinetz, consented to assume the post of *dame d'honneur* to Colonel Von Hackert's orphaned daughter, was a widow. Sixty years of bitter experience and care had bleached her hair to a silvery white but had not had the power to rob her kindly heart of its cheery unselfishness. She was one of those rare creatures who are always doing some kindly act for a fellow-being, and who yet are never justly appreciated. Quietly, unobtrusively she performed her acts of charity, and was happiest when she could do so unobserved and unnoticed.

From her earliest childhood Lucia von Hackert had known the excellent woman, and had learned to love and value her. She was therefore overjoyed when the widow consented to leave her own home and take up her quarters in the more stately mansion in K—— Street.

"The heavens show no signs of rejoicing over my convalescence," observed the young girl, smiling faintly and pointing toward the window, against which the rain and sleet were beating. "This is a real March storm. I am afraid it will break off all the young spring buds."

"Storms," responded the widow, "accompany all changes in our hearts as in the mighty *cosmos*. Every storm is followed by fresh growth and bloom, and so, my dear child, I think you may look on this March tempest as a symbol that fresh hopes will spring in

your heart after the sorrowful ordeal through which you have passed.

Lucia lightly pressed the old lady's hand.

"Your own good heart, dear aunt," she returned, "sees the best and most beautiful in everything. You are right. Every sorrow, even the greatest, must sooner or later find relief. That is one of nature's immutable laws. I shall soon be quite well again, and then we will carry out our plans of travel, will we not?"

"Yes, dear child, we will hunt up some retired nook where we can spend the summer quietly, then go either to Italy or Switzerland for the autumn months." While she was speaking she signed to Johanna to fetch the bronze card-receiver from a side-table. "See here, my dear," she went on, turning over the cards, "how many people thought of you while you were tossing in delirium on your sick-bed. Only see what a number of them came either in person or sent to inquire about you."

A pleased smile passed over the girl's pale face.

"How very kind of them!" she repeated several times, as she took up one after another of the cards. "I had no idea that I might count on so many kind friends! 'August Dreyfuss, counselor,' 'Theresa Dreyfuss,' 'Annie Bürger'—the entire counselor family! And here with their cards is that of Lieutenant Doring. That looks significant! Do you know, auntie, I believe there is something serious between Annie and the blonde artillery officer! You are acquainted with the lieutenant, aren't you?"

"Only very slightly, my darling. He was introduced to me at the counselor's, and made a very favorable impression on me. I should be delighted if Annie made a love marriage. She deserves to be happy, for she is an excellent girl. But I am afraid the counselor

has more ambitious views. He is a worthy man, honest and true to the core, but he is not without his weaknesses, and one of them is vanity. He would prefer his niece to marry an aristocrat. I wish my knowledge of human nature deceived me in this instance, but I fear it does not !”

“I should be so sorry,” slowly repeated Lucia. “I am fond of Annie, and wish her all the happiness that can come to one of my sex. She is the exact opposite of Frau Von Hilgersdorf, who, I see, has also honored us with a card. The young widow is one of the handsomest women I ever saw, but I must confess I am not specially attracted by her.”

“Nor am I,” responded Frau Von Sporken. “I dare say, however,” she hastened to add, “that her peculiar fate has had much to do with forming her rather problematic character. She was a mere girl when she married General Von Hilgersdorf to save her father from bankruptcy. The general was a morose old hypochondriac ; and what the poor girl must have endured, the three years of her married life, cannot be imagined ! I don’t believe she is bad at heart. Her embittered youth must bear the blame for her present frivolity. She is, *I think*, to be pitied instead of censured.”

“I do pity her, *Tantchen*,” earnestly exclaimed the young girl. “Just think ! Very little older than I and has already endured so much !”

“Yes, she is to be pitied,” repeated the elder lady, thoughtfully ; “but,” she added with some hesitation, “I shouldn’t want your sympathy to lead you to a closer intimacy with Frau Von Hilgersdorf.”

Lucia was silent for a moment ; then, keeping her eyes on the coffee-spoon, with which she was idly toying, she replied :

"I have always rather avoided than sought Frau Von Hilgersdorf's society, and I shall continue to avoid an intimacy with her. Auntie," suddenly looking up into the old lady's face, "do you imagine that I am not strong enough to hold myself aloof from evil influences?"

"By no means, my darling! You misunderstand me," returned Frau Von Sporken, tenderly pressing the hand Lucia extended toward her. "But as I have to watch over you with a mother's eye, you must occasionally allow me to caution you. But, enough of this subject! Your cousin Herbert was here yesterday. He has removed to Berlin, and came to pay you his introductory visit."

Lucia's lips curled slightly. She was not very favorably disposed toward her kinsman, of whom she had not heard much that was good; besides, she resented his uncousinly neglect of her during the first heavy days of mourning. She repressed the ironical observation which rose to her lips, however, and said, instead:

"I shall be glad if he is more successful here than he has been heretofore. He has done little to add honor to the name of Hackert-Selchern."

"He is still young, and must sow his wild oats," was the elder lady's charitable rejoinder. "We will hope so, at least. I had only a few words' conversation with him, but they gave me the impression that the crop he has to dispose of is a considerable one! He is your nearest living relation, Lux; consequently we must bear with his shortcomings, and have him here occasionally. *Sans gene*, of course, as we shall not entertain largely."

"As you wish, dear aunt," assented Lucia. "I leave all social arrangements to you."

She rose, stepped to the elder lady's side and, bending tenderly over the silvered head, said in a low tone

"Have you forgotten what you promised me, *Tantchen*?"

Frau Von Sporken passed her cool, soft hand over the girl's cheek, and replied :

"No, my dear child, I have not forgotten that I promised to let you go into your papa's rooms so soon as you were strong enough. I am afraid you are still too weak to bear the agitation. Better wait a few days longer, my dear. You know the doctor says it is absolutely necessary that you should be perfectly quiet."

"But, my dear aunt, just look at me ! Am not I my old self again?" exclaimed Lucia, stepping to the mirror over the mantel.

The image reflected in the polished surface startled her. She would not have believed that the four weeks' illness could leave such deep shadows underneath her eyes ; could rob her cheeks of their rosy color and leave them so thin and wan. Lucia noted these changes, but turned with a smile on her pale lips to Frau Von Sporken, who was standing at her shoulder, and said jestingly :

"Another week, *Tantchen*, then I shall look the same old Lucia ! I feel just as well—and strong as ever. Strong enough, at all events, to bear all sorrowful recollections. You may, without fear of evil results, allow me to go into papa's rooms. The visit will comfort instead of grieve me."

Frau Von Sporken was about to yield to the young girl's entreaties and ring for the keys of the colonel's rooms, which had not been opened since the funeral, when August entered the room with a visiting-card.

"The gentleman begs the ladies to receive him to-day," he said, presenting the card to Frau Von Sporken.

"It is Herr Von Holgen, commissioner of police," she said, glancing at the card. "He has been here before—indeed, three times—but you were, of course, too ill to see him. You know what he wants, my dear?"

Lucia's face flushed, and a look of annoyance passed across her features.

"Yes, I can guess," she replied, rather irritably. "Solicitor Wallerstein acted unwisely when he informed the police of that unimportant affair. There was not the slightest necessity for his doing so." She turned to August and added: "You may show the gentleman into the small reception-room. We will see him there."

Police Commissioner Von Holgen, a stately man of middle age, in whom one recognized at a first glance the former army officer, greeted the two ladies with a courtly bow.

"I trust you will pardon this untimely intrusion," he began at once, addressing Lucia. "Unfortunately, when one is a slave to official duty, conventionalities cannot be considered. You will guess, doubtless, that my early visit has to do with the burglary."

Lucia bowed assent, and motioned Herr Holgen to be seated.

"The record we have of the affair," he resumed, taking a chair, "is lacking in detail. You will, therefore, oblige me very much by answering a few questions. First of all, gracious miss, can you depend on your servants as being entirely trustworthy?"

"I answered that question in the affirmative the morning the safe was found open," returned Lucia. "I should like to repeat what I said then—that I do not consider the affair of the slightest importance. It cannot be called a burglary—rather a trifling neglect, which might happen very easily in such an hour of excitement."

Herr Von Holgen smiled faintly and passed his gloved hand over his blonde beard.

"I can't say that I quite agree with you, gracious miss," he responded, after a moment's deliberation. "I hope, however, that we shall very soon be able to decide whether you are right or not. We were on the point of dropping the matter, as you requested, when we received an anonymous notification—"

"An anonymous notification?" interrupted both Lucia and Frau Von Sporken.

The commissioner bowed and thrust his hand into his breast-pocket, from which he took a letter.

"I have no reason to keep this a secret from you," he said. "You may be able to give me a clue. Is the writing familiar to you?"

Lucia looked closely at the envelope—the characters were large, stiff and ill-formed—and shook her head.

"I cannot recall ever seeing any writing similar to it," she said, slowly.

"It is not likely that you have," returned Herr von Holgen. "The writer would be careful to disguise his hand. Perhaps the affair will appear more important when I tell you that this notification asserts that important documents were taken from your father's safe?"

"That is hardly likely, as papa always kept a list of everything he had in the safe. There is no mention of any documents in the list we found in papa's desk."

"Might not your father have neglected to make a note of the papers?" suggested the commissioner.

"He might have, but I don't think he did. Papa was always very methodical and extremely careful concerning money matters."

Herr Von Holgen toyed with the glove he had drawn from his left hand.

"The documents could not have been of much value," he observed slowly, "else they would have been mentioned in the will. They may be family papers—documents which some one may have an interest in possessing?"

Lucia drew her arched brows slightly closer together. The commissioner's tone did not please her.

"The Hackert-Selchern family is so well known," she responded proudly, "that I cannot imagine what interest any papers concerning them could have for a stranger."

"And yet," after a pause, returned the commissioner, "I cannot think of any other reason. However, I will be as brief as possible, miss, for I see that you are still very weak. I believe August, the butler, and Baron Von Menken were the only watchers in the chamber of death the night your father died?"

Lucia nodded assent.

"The baron is an intimate friend of the family, I believe?"

"He was a near friend of papa's for many years," replied Lucia. "He was here when papa died."

"It is singular," thoughtfully pursued the commissioner, "that neither the baron nor August heard any noise in the study. August swears that while he slept the baron remained awake. You, gracious miss, heard nothing unusual, I presume?"

"I never closed my eyes the entire night, but I heard nothing," was the reply.

"And the keys of the safe were found the next morning in the place where your papa usually kept them?" continued Herr Von Holgen, making several entries in his note-book.

"Yes—in the little watch-pocket which hung at the head of his bed. No one beside myself knew where he kept them."

"Are you quite certain on that point, miss?"

"Quite certain, commissioner."

"I have but one more favor to ask, said Von Holgen, rising. "May I see your father's study?"

Lucia bowed without speaking; and Frau Von Sporken led the way toward the closed rooms.

No changes had been made in the colonel's study since his death. Even the papers on the writing-table lay as he had left them when he became too ill to leave his bed; the pen, with its carved holder, lay on a sheet of note-paper that bore the old soldier's vigorous chirography.

Herr Von Holgen walked directly to the window, the only one in the little octagon-shaped room. He opened it and looked out into the garden, which was encircled by tall buildings. Close underneath the window was a slight projection, the roof of a doorway in the ground floor. From this projection a thief might easily swing himself to the window-sill; but Von Holgen shook his head. It would be impossible to open the window from the outside.

He then turned toward the safe. He scrutinized closely the locks and the various compartments, carefully noting everything in his book. Shortly afterward he took his leave.

As the door closed upon him Lucia sank exhausted into a chair.

"I wish everything concerning that annoying affair were forgotten!" she exclaimed fretfully. "I am convinced that all these examinations and inquiries will lead to nothing."

Frau Von Sporken made no reply. She was busied

closing the compartments in the safe and restoring to their places the objects the commissioner had displaced in his quest for information.

When she had concluded the task, she came toward Lucia and said :

“The commissioner’s official curiosity has been too much for your strength, my dear child. I can see that plainly ! Come, let me take you to your room for a brief rest. I shall give orders to August not to admit any more visitors to-day. We shall have time enough to see callers when you are quite well again.”

Lucia took the offered arm, and with an air of utter weariness allowed herself to be led into her own room.





## CHAPTER V.

### THE INSEPARABLES.

Baron Von Menken was a welcome visitor in the most exclusive houses in the Residenz. His courteous manner, his brilliant conversation, his *esprit* and inexhaustible wit, which was as harmless as it was pungent, were attributes which won for him the admiration of every one upon whom he chose to bestow his favor.

There were a few persons, however, who maintained that, with all the baron's seeming frankness, a certain mystery enveloped his personality. Countess Waldberg, a dowager of seventy-three years, who had at one time been lady-in-waiting at one of the minor courts, was the first to detect the "mystery" in Von Menken's character. This discovery, however, did not detract from the baron's popularity. It served rather to augment his influence and make him more interesting—to the gentler sex, at all events.

The majority of Menken's acquaintances among the sterner sex saw in him a "superficial nature that understood how to make friends quickly." A very few

asserted, too, that he was "a man who wished to appear other than he was." His *blasé* air, his apparent indolence, were only masks to hide his real self. Even his features, they asserted, were so entirely under his control that he could without difficulty assume any expression suitable to the occasion. Once, when one of his well-meaning "friends" frankly told Menken that people said he understood how to manage even the wrinkles on his face, the baron, with perfect seriousness, acknowledged that the accusation was true, that he had taken lessons from a celebrated mimic, in order that he might be able, should he happen to lose his fortune, to adopt the remunerative calling of a pantomimist.

Such a misfortune, however, was not likely to overtake the baron, for it was well known that he was an extremely prudent man concerning all financial transactions. Just how much he was worth had puzzled many a member of society. Some maintained that he was rich—very rich! Others pretended to know that he was only what might be termed "comfortably off," but that he knew so well how to manage his expenses that he appeared to be a person of great wealth.

"His style of living, however, left no doubt that he had command of considerable means. He occupied handsome apartments in one of the most fashionable streets, and possessed tastes and inclinations which only great wealth can satisfy. Both of his racers, Hinkepinke and Lord Radcliff, were well, and favorably known on every race-course in Germany. The pedigrees of his kennels, on his hunting-estate in Silesia, were as long as any in the country. His wine-cellar was celebrated for the age and excellence of the vintage; his "little dinners" were the masterpieces of a noted *chef*.

There was one passion, usually found in a man of the world like Menken, which the baron did not possess : the love of play. Scores of times he had positively refused to take part in a hastily improvised rubber for small stakes, declaring that he never touched cards, nor would he keep a supply of the "pasteboards" in his house.

This his acquaintances knew, and as they generally preferred a little game after a good dinner, they always brought their cards with them.

Count Sturen, a young cavalry officer, was the one to institute this "habit," and from that day it became the unfailing custom for one or another of the baron's guests to have in his pocket—"quite by accident," of course—a pack or two of cards.

Menken did not frown upon this persistent determination of his guests to gamble in his house ; but, with a cigar between his lips, a cup of coffee within easy reach of his hand, he would sit for hours and watch the game and the changing expressions on the faces of the players. He would say at such times that he was studying physiognomy, and that his guests should not heed him. And they did not ; but played on merrily, keeping strictly within bounds of the stakes Menken himself had arranged.

There was a good deal of argument concerning the cause of Menken's refusal to play—he would not join even a game of whist or *écarté*—but nothing definite could be determined on. Menken himself admitted that he used to be fond of a "hazard at fortune," but that he had become too nervous to depend on chance. This was not a satisfactory reason, for Menken's nerves were of iron. Had they not been, he would not have been the excellent marksman and intrepid rider he was. His aversion for gaming must, therefore, have

a deeper cause! That which was generally known about Menken's past was little enough. He had studied jurisprudence, had been in the diplomatic service, had once filled the office of chamberlain at a minor court. In the war between France and Germany he had been an officer in a cuirassier regiment, and had distinguished himself by bravery. At the conclusion of the war he had traveled for several years, returning at last to settle down in Berlin, where, as it was said, he "lived on his interest," and played a not insignificant *rôle* in society.

This was, in general, the biography of the "mysterious" Baron Attokar von Menken.

Beside Colonel Von Hackert, who had been a brother in arms, and a warm friend, there was one other to whom Menken opened his heart. This was Elimar Waldau. The young artist had had a sorrowful childhood. His father, a physician of some celebrity, was on a fair way to accumulate a fortune, when a serious illness overtook him and rendered him incapable of further practice. A few years sufficed to reduce the now helpless family to poverty, and a poverty that was doubly hard to bear because of the desire to keep it hidden from the world. Those were bitter days for the once prosperous Waldau family, days of terrible struggles to keep up appearances.

The doctor would fain have quitted Berlin and hidden himself in some country village, where they were unknown, and where they might reveal their impoverished condition, but his wife, who was a "born gentlewoman," rebelled with all her weak might.

Elimar's mother was a daughter of the house of Von Bartenklau, whose entire wealth lay in an imposing coat of arms and a long pedigree. She was past the bloom of youth when Doctor Waldau wooed her for

love's sake ! The penniless gentlewoman accepted her lowly-born suitor, not because she loved him, but because she had long been forced to give up all hope of winning a mate her equal in rank.

True nobility suits itself to all circumstances, and takes pride in bearing with dignity even the trials of life. A false education, however, had crushed these admirable principles from Frau Mathilde Waldau's heart. She was fond of display, and sought by outward show to indemnify herself for her *mésalliance*, and for the economies she had been forced to endure under the paternal roof. So long as the doctor enjoyed good health she was able to indulge her extravagant tastes, but when illness robbed him of the capacity to earn a livelihood, she was forced to return to the old habits of economy. This was a heavy trial for the pleasure-loving woman, who added by her embittered reproaches mental suffering to the physical tortures endured by her husband.

After awhile came the doctor's release—he died, weary of his life's brilliant misery.

Frau Mathilde was now alone in the world, a helpless, penniless widow with a son, a lad yet in his teens. In her despair she swallowed her pride, and applied for help to a distant kinsman who was reputed to be rich, and whom she had once, while yet she hoped to make a more brilliant marriage, refused.

Her appeal was successful. She received from her quondam suitor a modest annuity that enabled her to live without care, but allowed her no extravagances.

Elimar was, at this time, seventeen years old, and the question of a career for him forced itself upon his mother. He was a handsome lad, who had inherited his father's tender heart and his mother's good looks. He possessed an intelligent brain and clever talents,

which promised well for his future. Unfortunately, there was lacking the strong hand to train and bring to fruit the embryo germ in him. At first he thought he preferred a musical career; but after several months' diligent study, he felt that he was endowed with another talent it might be well to cultivate. He then applied himself to the study of art, and very soon demonstrated that he had decided wisely. His success, it is true, was not known beyond the circles of the academy; for more important work Elimar still lacked the energy, the incentive.

The boy was, like his mother, fond of pleasure and luxury. As Frau Mathilde devoted her annuity chiefly to supplying her own wants, Elimar found himself at last compelled to work for money. He succeeded passably; but his talents suffered by it, as the "pot-boilers" he was forced to produce prevented higher work. Only once had he succeeded in completing a work of real merit. His "Vestal Virgin" had won the approval of the critics and—what was more to the point with him—found a purchaser.

The purchaser was Baron Von Menken who, when he sought the young artist in his studio, found him in an agony of grief. The young man was just returned from the funeral of his mother, whom a sudden illness had carried away.

Menken's sympathies were won by the poignant sorrows of the youth in whom he had detected, with the eye of a connoisseur, a genius that was worth cultivating.

The acquaintance between the man of the world and the unknown artist ripened into warm friendship. Menken very soon won a controlling influence over the easily led Elimar, who looked up to the older man as to an elder brother. The two were seen so frequently

together, that society dubbed them "the inseparables."

The baron's friendship, however, had not, thus far, resulted for Elimar's good. The young man had been drawn into the gay, social world. Its amusements weakened his desire to work—his interest in his art. The readiness with which the baron placed his check-book at his young friend's disposal was another injury. Elimar forgot that his benefactor's gifts, though cheerfully bestowed, were only alms; and he was in a fair way of losing all the energy he had. But circumstances were very soon to develop which would rouse him from his sluggish existence.





## CHAPTER VI.

### “DIAVOLETTA.”

There was a sharp peal at the door-bell of Elimar Waldau's apartment. After a considerable interval the door was opened slowly and cautiously a few inches, and an old woman's face peered from the narrow aperture into the corridor. She nodded in a friendly manner to the caller, and laying her forefinger against her toothless mouth, said, in an admonitory whisper :

“Hush ! My young gentleman is still asleep.”

“What, still sleeping, and nearly ten o'clock ? Just let me come in, Susanne, and I'll fetch the idle fellow out of the feathers !”

Without heeding the old servant's remonstrance, Eugene Blenkner pushed past her, strode through the studio and into Elimar's bed-chamber.

Here he was obliged to pause a moment to let his eyes grow accustomed to the darkness. Then he stepped to the window, drew back the heavy curtains and flung open the sash, letting a flood of light and fresh air into the room.

The refreshing breath swept across the sleeper's

face; he stirred, lifted himself from the pillow and stared blinkingly at the intruder.

"Wake up, my heart, and sing!" in a dramatic tone recited Blenkner. "I do believe you would have slept until noon if I had not roused you! Just behold this enchanting spring morning! How can you allow the slumber god to detain you in his fetters? You've been dissipating again, I'll venture—far into the small hours?"

Waldau lay back on his pillow and rubbed his eyes sleepily. A faint smile passed over his pale face, then gave place again to the little frown of discontent which usually lingered between his brows.

"Ah-h, yes," he yawned, "it was rather an excitable evening—a chaotic one, I may say. B-r-r, I shudder when I think of it!"

He closed his eyes, as if to shut out the vision which recalled the memory.

"Still-Life Eugene's" curiosity was aroused.

"And where did this hurly-burly take place?" he asked, seating himself by the bedside. "And who was there? Menken for one, naturally."

"Menken?" repeated Elimar, with a laugh. "Not he! Had he been present, the affair would not have terminated in such bacchanalia. Menken is too dignified to countenance such a row! The affair, an impromptu one, began quietly enough. I met Lieutenant Doring and young Hackert—you know him, the colonel's nephew, a feather-brain, but a good sort of chap—they were going to drink a pint of Rothspohn—no more—and insisted on my joining them. *Mon Dieu*, what that pint led to! Unfortunately, when we got to Julitz's, we encountered a lot of fellows who were celebrating Pringsberg's birthday. We, of course, had to join them, and after emptying the punch-bowl, we all drove to

the bowling-alley and— But enough ! I did not get home until five o'clock this morning, and it is the last time I take part in a drinking-bout of that sort."

"Yes, I dare say," dryly observed Blenkner, adding with more interest : "There was some betting at the alley, I presume. Who won?"

Elimar yawned again before replying :

"I believe I was the chief winner. Just look in my pockets yonder and see how much is there. I have an indistinct recollection of putting a whole handful of gold and paper into my pockets. I may have spent some of it before leaving the alley. I can't remember."

Blenkner shook his head in disapproval of such carelessness ; and the bitter envy he cherished in his heart toward his more fortunate fellow-craftsman was increased on hearing of Elimar's lucky winnings. He picked up the various garments lying scattered about on the floor. In the pockets of the coat, waistcoat and trousers were gold and silver coins and carelessly crushed banknotes. Blenkner smoothed a place on the bed-covers and proceeded to count the money ; while Elimar, with half-closed eyes and a weary expression on his pale face, looked on in silence.

"Three hundred and seventy—eighty—ninety ! A tidy sum, my dear fellow," he exclaimed.

"Isn't it ? And when I began to bet I had only twenty marks. *Pfui !* It's a shabby business, this taking a friend's money because chance favors you. I am ashamed of myself ! Doring was the most sensible of the lot of us ! He declared that he shared Menken's opinion of gambling, and wouldn't bet a sou. He is right, quite right ! Such pastime ruins one's character—makes one ill-humored, avaricious and vile generally."

Eugene laughed.

"You exaggerate, my dear boy," he responded, and

his eyes hung with secret longing on the money. "I don't think it is the desire to win that prompts one to play games of hazard. Merely amusement, Waldau—merely amusement. So long as a game is played merely for amusement there surely is no harm in it."

"We need not argue the point," returned Elimar, stretching himself; "we should only continue to disagree. I will only say that I think Menken is right: That every one who plays—*every one* without exception—becomes so infatuated with the demon of gold that he ends by playing solely to win. Now, my dear Blenkner, please take the money off my bed, and if you will kindly take yourself into the studio I'll get up and dress, and join you in a few minutes."

Blenkner swept the coin and notes into his hand and laid them on the table, and remarking:

"I'll take a look at your latest creations," went into the studio.

Elimar rose. He was still weary, and the vigorous drenchings with cold water he gave his head, and afterward with cologne, were not enough to refresh him. He was out of humor with himself—even more dissatisfied than usual. The scenes of the past night now seemed to him a disgraceful orgy; he cursed the childish weakness which made it impossible for him to keep the resolutions made a hundred times. He surveyed his reflection in the mirror. The face was pale; deep shadows lay underneath the eyes. He looked ill, and felt weak, in mind as well as in body.

He lifted a small, ornamental flagon from the toilet-table, removed the stopper, and inhaled the pungent fumes of the salts; then he thrust his arms into the sleeves of an embroidered smoking-jacket and went into the studio.

On a little table in the bow-window was the morning

tea Susanne had just brought in. Susanne was the feminine factotum of the young artist's apartments, and watched over Elimar with a motherly care. She lectured him in unadulterated Berlin dialect when he was idle, and showered praises on him when he completed a picture.

Susanne was arranging the plates and cups, and was engaged in a lively conversation with Herr Blenkner when Elimar entered.

“Well, I must say this is interesting,” exclaimed Blenkner turning toward Elimar, “and Susanne tells me you have not yet heard the good news.”

“And how should my young gentleman have heard it?” crisply demanded the dame. “How should he hear anything when he deserts his studio at noon and doesn't come back until next morning, and sleeps until eleven o'clock? Just look at him, Herr Blenkner! How pale he is, and an old body like me is not to get discouraged when—”

“Come, come, Susanne,” half-jestingly, half-irritably interrupted Elimar, “don't begin to lecture. I am not in the humor to listen to a sermon on morals. What have you to tell me? Have I had a call from a patron?”

“And such a patron!” interposed Blenkner. “Just look at this gilt-edged, perfumed visiting-card! Can you guess what name it bears!”

Elimar frowned.

“I think I can,” he returned curtly, Fräulein Bessner, the soubrette, has been teasing me for months to paint her portrait. I have no desire to transfer her grisette beauty to canvas.”

“You are mistaken, it is not Fräulein Bessner; and as you never would guess the name of your early visitor I'll tell you—Frau Von Hilgersdorf.”

Elimar dropped his teaspoon; his astonishment was

visible on his face and in the hasty movement with which he turned toward Blenkner.

"Frau Von Hilgersdorf?" he repeated, incredulously. "Now, what can she want, I wonder?"

"Still-Life Eugene" looked with an arch smile at the speaker.

"You will find out very soon, my dear innocent, the fair widow left word that she would call again in an hour. You may therefore"—glancing toward the clock—"expect her any moment. There!" as a sharp peal from the door-bell interrupted him. "There she is now. Shall I vanish? There is no telling what the little beauty may have to say to you."

Elimar had risen from the table.

"Just go into the bedroom," he said, hastily, "and take those tea-things with you. I don't want Frau Von Hilgersdorf to find me just breakfasting."

There was a knock at the studio door, which opened without further ceremony, and Baron Von Menken entered.

"Ah, Herr Von Menken!" exclaimed Eugene, coming back with the tea-service. "Pray don't fancy I have become Waldau's tray-bearer. I am only acting a part in a comedy. We did not expect you, but a fair visitor, Frau Von Hilgersdorf."

The baron returned Blenkner's greeting with a cool nod, and held out his hand to Elimar.

"I am intruding, I fear," he said, unbuttoning his cloak; "but I shall stop only a few moments, as I am due at a lunch at twelve. I should like a few words with you, Elimar."

This was plain enough for "Still-Life Eugene," who, as he passed into the adjoining room, cast a glance that was anything but amiable toward the baron.

Herr Von Menken drew a chair toward the table,

seated himself and attentively examined his gloves for several seconds before speaking.

"I am not given to sermonizing, as you well know, Elimar," he began at last, looking earnestly at his young friend, "and I dislike very much to say anything to you that sounds like a lecture. I trust that you will believe that what I am going to say is prompted by sincere friendship and regard. You spent last night in a very merry company, didn't you?"

Waldau bowed.

"Yes," he replied, "Pringsberg, Doring, myself and several others met at Julitz's. Chance seems my bitterest foe; it always leads me into the wildest society."

"Pray don't think that I came here to reprove you," in a kindly tone interposed the baron. "I know what it is to be young and merry. Years alone can teach one that it is better for the mind and body to be moderate in all things. No, it is not of your merry-making I wish to speak. Be joyous, care-free, gay as you like—only—be more careful in your choice of society."

Elimar's face darkened.

"It is said that *you* are my most intimate friend," he retorted, sullenly.

"Don't be angry, Elimar," quietly returned the baron. "You must have seen ere this that your irony falls harmlessly on me. I am too earnestly your friend, and not only in the opinion of the world! As your friend, I say again: Be careful with whom you associate."

"Pray speak plainly, Herr Von Menken!" testily exclaimed Waldau. "I dislike insinuations. Of whom am I to be careful? You allude to some particular person. Who is it?"

"I did not mean to 'insinuate,' as you say, Elimar,

for I don't think I need fear even so famous a duelist as young Hackert is said to be," smilingly responded Menken.

"Oh, Hackert!" Elimar shrugged his shoulders. "And you really believe I need to be warned against that senseless chatterer? Heaven knows, Attokar, there is no need of such warning."

"I am glad to hear that, my dear lad. I was afraid the student had shown you the amiable side of his character."

"And so he has. He is amusing in spite in spite of his bluster and swagger. But I am no more intimate with him than I am with any other chance acquaintance whom I happen to meet at a drinking-bout. No, indeed, Hackert will never become a friend of mine. But why do you warn me against him specially?"

The baron hesitated a moment, then said:

"I have every reason to mistrust him. He is not only frivolous to a degree; but he is also, I fear, an unscrupulous scoundrel."

Waldau became suddenly thoughtful.

"You may be right," he responded after a pause. "He wants to be very friendly and sociable with me, but I shall avoid him in every possible way."

"And you will find later that you have done well," supplemented the baron. "Pardon my plain-speaking, Elimar, but I know your easy-going nature so well. You are too easily won by a jolly companion. This Blenkner," lowering his tone and nodding toward the adjoining room, "also is, to my mind, no fit companion for you."

Waldau smiled.

"'Still-Life' Eugene? My dear Attokar, I can assure you that the fellow's society is utterly distasteful to me. He is a coward, deceitful, envious and malicious. It is

not an easy matter, however, to keep such reptiles at a distance. They are so obtrusive."

Menken rose.

"Then my little mission is accomplished happily, I trust," he said, glancing toward the clock. "Half-past eleven? I must make haste! Old Ichlieben does not like his Moscow patties cold. You are expecting a call from Frau Von Hilgersdorf. I believe the fair widow has an eye on you, my lad! Not a bad match, either, by the way."

He had turned away as he added the concluding sentence, but not far enough to avoid seeing the deep flush which shot into his young friend's face, which became crimson to the roots of his blonde hair.

"Pray, none of that sort of banter with me, I beg, my dear Menken. Frau Von Hilgersdorf is no more to me than a hundred other women, old and young, whom we meet in society. I haven't the least interest in any of the sex but the one whom you know."

Menken turned abruptly, and let his eyes rest with a peculiar expression on Elimar's face.

"It were better to suppress this passion in time, my lad," he said quietly. "You hope in vain."

"In vain?" echoed Elimar, his voice rising, much to the satisfaction of Herr Blenkner, who was listening attentively at the bedroom-door. "Have you a reason for robbing me of the hope which is my moral support, which keeps me from losing heart altogether? You, with your heart of marble, have no sympathy, cannot understand the passionate yearning of a lover, cannot understand how a single thought can fill the soul! I should be inexpressibly miserable did I not hope, did I not believe that my love would some time be returned. No, no. I cannot, *will not*, believe your cruel words!"

With a sudden movement the baron stepped to Elimar's side and laid his hand on the young man's shoulder :

"You are right, Waldau. I, with my prosaic nature, cannot understand a youthful passion. This is the last time I shall discuss this subject with you. *Auf wiedersehen !*"

Menken's tone had become so gentle, so tender, that a sympathetic chord in Waldau's heart was deeply touched. Perhaps the baron was, after all, more tender-hearted than he appeared !

"*Auf wiedersehen*, my dear friend," returned the warm-hearted artist, cordially pressing the hand extended toward him.

He stood facing Menken, and noticed that the baron wore a new scarf-pin. It was a curious little ornament—a tiny gold figure, holding in its uplifted hands a shield, that bore on its face a serpent in relief. The eyes of the serpent, which held its tail in its mouth—the symbol of infinity—as well as the nail heads around the edge of the shield, were diamonds.

Menken saw that Elimar's eyes rested on the ornament, and for a moment it seemed almost as if he became confused.

"Do you like the pin ?" he asked, with affected carelessness. "It is pretty, isn't it ? It was my father's. I seldom wear it, because I don't care for brilliants, but I lost or mislaid my favorite pearl the other day, so put this on instead."

He pressed Elimar's hand once more and moved toward the door, which opened at that moment to admit Frau Von Hilgersdorf. She blushed deeply in returning the baron's respectful salutation, evidently embarrassed at meeting him in Waldau's studio.

Elimar received his fair visitor with extreme cour-

tesy. Frau Von Hilgersdorf extended her hand in greeting to the artist, then seated herself in the chair he drew forward for her.

"I know you are surprised to receive a visit from me, Herr Waldau," she began, letting her beautiful eyes wander unrestrainedly about the room. "I shall therefore tell you, without further ceremony, what brings me here. I want you to paint my portrait."

"You are very flattering, gracious lady," responded Elimar, bowing courteously. "I trust I may be able to perform the work in a manner that will be satisfactory to you."

"Were I not already convinced of that, I should go to Gussow or Richter; but I prefer your work to theirs. A short time ago I saw at Myers's a picture of yours—the portrait of the *ballerina della Occa*, represented as a will-o'-the-wisp, and was told it was your own idea. It is excellent! The colorless face and flaming eyes of the Italian dancer are peculiarly adapted to represent the mysterious sprite said to frequent graveyards. I was so charmed with the picture that I determined to be painted in character—something different from the conventional portrait. I dare say you have heard me called 'eccentric'—*N'importe!* Well, I want to be represented by a character in keeping with my reputation."

"I am curious, dear madam, to hear in what character you wish to be portrayed?" said Elimar.

"Professor Mehrou said in jest lately that I possessed a dual nature—half angel, half demon. I think I am more demon than angel. Now, what say you to the character of 'Diavoletta'?"

Elimar could not suppress the smile which rose to his lips as the beautiful woman rested her expressive eyes on him. The saucy little head, the cherry lips, the

black brows almost meeting above the slightly turned-up nose, really seemed more like the seductive mask of a siren than the countenance of a cherub. There was a trace of unrestrained passion in the piquant features, forehead, eyes, delicate nostrils, voluptuous mouth, and rosy chin.

"I can only assent with reluctance to such a command, gracious lady," he returned, bowing, "because I believe the art of portraiture to be profound when it is used to reproduce impossibilities. However—"

"You consent to paint the picture," laughingly interposed the lady. "You need not take the trouble to flatter me Herr Waldau, such coin does not pass with me! To be serious, I have taken into my head to see myself on canvas as 'Diavoletta,' when can the sittings begin?"

"Whenever madam desires."

"To-morrow then. Will it suit you just as well to come to my house? I think I prefer that to coming here."

"As you wish, gracious lady. I shall send an easel and whatever else is required to your residence."

"And now about the costume?" resumed Frau Von Hilgersdorf with increasing animation. "My dress-maker is always ready. She can produce in a few hours the most elaborate ball-gown. What would you suggest as appropriate?"

Waldau deliberated several minutes.

"It is no easy matter to decide just what would suit your fancy," he returned. "I think, however, that a sort of crown of blood-red cock's feathers, rising from a circlet of gold heads, would suit your hair as well as the character you wish to represent. Two tiny golden horns, very small, you know, merely to indicate the character, above the temples, a chain of antique coins

with cabalistic characters around the neck, as worn by the women of the Orient; a red mantle with gold embroidery, hung from the shoulders, and a short red skirt with similar decorations. That, I fancy, would be a suitable costume for a 'Diavoletta'—a 'Diavoletta' to be sure who would simply be a contrast to the 'Angelina' posing for her!"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf lifted her finger.

"There! You are flattering again," she exclaimed, reprovingly. "I must congratulate you on your skill as a designer of costumes! You must have had in your brief career a good deal to do with feminine demons? May I expect you to-morrow?" she concluded, rising.

"At the hour which best suits your convenience, gracious lady."

"Thanks! Then at twelve I shall await you in my scarlet mantle and diadem of feathers!"

Elimar gallantly pressed his lips to the little hand held out to him, and his fair patron rustled from the studio.

The door had hardly closed behind her, when Herr Blenkner came from the bedroom. His face was flushed. He carried in one hand a bottle, in the other a glass of wine.

"You miserly creature!" he exclaimed, waving the half-empty bottle toward Elimar. "How can you hide this Spanish nectar in the darkest corner of your den and not share it with your visitors? To punish you for your niggardliness I released the spirits of the bottle. It was too close for them in this narrow prison. Well," surveying Elimar with a leering smile, "is the audience ended? Has the lovely widow been dismissed?"

Elimar turned with a gesture of disgust from him.

"Stop your nonsense, Blenkner!" he returned, impatiently. "Frau Von Hilgersdorf wants to be painted in the character of 'Diavoletta.' That was her errand."

Eugene laughed boisterously.

"As 'Diavoletta?' That is capital! Excellent! In every woman there lurks a devil; but the fair Hilgersdorf can claim two of them! Come, Waldau, let us drink to the fair 'Diavoletta!'"





## CHAPTER VII.

### SIGNOR CADAMA.

A slender man of not unattractive appearance ascended the broad stone steps of a large apartment-house in that quarter of the Residenz which is occupied by the students who wish to be near their *alma mater*. It would have been difficult to decide the age of this man, who might have been called handsome had his face been more rounded, and had it not been disfigured by a nervous play of the muscles. The steel-gray eyes underneath their shaggy brows had in them an almost repulsive expression ; while the profile of his face showed a projecting if intellectual forehead, a large nose that stood boldly out from the lean cheeks and the sharp and bloodless lips that gave to the whole countenance a vampire-like character.

The coal-black beard which fell from his chin, half way down his breast, was so trimmed and shaven as to leave his face clean to the projecting cheek-bones. The carefully arranged hair, crowned by a shiny "chimney-pot" hat, was combed over the ears in front. The clothes of this very singular-looking personage were of the latest cut and finest materials ; but from the boots on his slim feet to the closely buttoned collar of his *paletot* everything was coal-black.

He ascended the staircase with a deliberate tread, pausing on the landings to read the names on the cards tacked underneath the bell-cord. At last, on the third floor, he seemed to have found what he was hunting. He read over the second time the name, "Herbert von Hackert-Selchern," before knocking at the door on which was tacked the student's visiting card.

"Walk right in !" called a drawling voice inside.

The reception which greeted the visitor, when he opened the door, was not a very friendly one. A gigantic Ulmer mastiff rose from the floor and began to growl threateningly.

"Down, Montazza—down, you brute ! Under the sofa. Do you hear ?"

The student, at the visitor's entrance, had half risen from his recumbent position on the black-leather sofa ; but he laid aside neither the cigar, the smoke from which filled the room, nor the novel which he had evidently just begun to read, as he stared inquiringly at the intruder, and demanded, in a tone that was anything but amiable :

"Who are you, and what do you want ?"

"I am called Giulio Cadama, and I want money," calmly and with a foreign accent replied the stranger.

Suprised and interested, the student now sat upright and scrutinized his singular visitor, who returned the glance composedly. He did not move from the spot but remained standing just inside the door.

"I am not acquainted with any Herr Caldauma, or whatever you call yourself," said Hackert, irritated by the stranger's self-possession. "Nor can I remember owing a Herr Caldauma anything."

"I dare say not," calmly responded the stranger. "I don't think it likely that I would ever have loaned you

a *soldo*; but chance happened to throw into my possession several due bills bearing your signature, and you will hardly deny that the time for their payment is long past, and that I have a right to want the money."

The student laughed heartily.

"No, of course I don't deny anything you have said, my good Herr Caldauma!" he exclaimed, again stretching himself on at full length on the sofa. "I am only sorry that you took the trouble to come up here, as I am not in condition to satisfy your wants. I'll tell you what you can do for me, though," he added, after blowing a cloud of smoke from his lips. "You can add a few hundred marks to the sum I already owe you, and that will round out the figures handsomely."

Herr Giulio Cadama nodded. A peculiar smile lurked about his thin lips as he replied:

"I really cannot see why I should not make such a loan—"

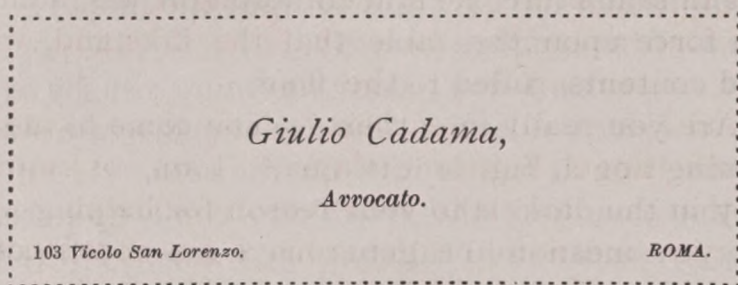
Hackert did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence. He sprang from the sofa and drew a chair to the table.

"Sit down, my dear Herr Caldauma—pray take a chair and make yourself comfortable. Here, let me take your hat. May I offer you a cigar? Not? Sorry you don't smoke. I've got some prime weeds here, genuine Havanas, mild, delicious! And so you are able and willing to help me with a loan of a few thousand marks? That is awfully kind of you! You are quite safe in lending the money, for I expect very soon to be able to repay you, with whatever interest you may desire. How much can you let me have? I'm in a devil of a tight place just at present, and the more you can spare the better, my good Caldauma."

The stranger made no reply to this long speech, but drew from his breast-pocket a large, well-filled letter-

case, took from it a visiting-card, which he handed to the student.

Hackert read aloud with increasing surprise :



"My name, as you see, baron," observed the Italian, "is Cadama, and not Caldauma as you persist in calling me. My card will also tell you, if you have not already detected it in my speech, that I am no countryman of yours, but a native of the land where, according to one of your poets, the golden orange gleams brightly amid the dark foliage, and where, according to my knowledge, all manner of noxious weeds flourish luxuriantly. *Al Terzio*, baron, I have learned, for your sake alone, to speak your language, a task by no means easy for a Roman tongue, and I have journeyed to Berlin solely for the purpose of supplying you with money."

The cigar almost dropped from Hackert's lips. He flung the novel into a corner of the room, kicked the dog for fetching it back to him, then, resting his hands on the table, stared with questioning eyes at his visitor.

Signor tapped his handkerchief against his high forehead, then continued, in a lower tone :

"I have a business in view, baron, a business that will pay us both handsomely. In order to introduce myself to you, I was forced to adopt strategic measures. I have long known that a number of your due-bills were in circulation and it was not at all difficult to secure some of them. You cannot pay me ; that does

not matter ! I shall with pleasure advance further sums ; quite enough in fact, to, as the saying goes, set you on your legs again."

At this juncture the student brought his hand with such force upon the table that the inkstand, with its dried contents, rolled to the floor.

"Are you really in earnest ? You come to me like a rescuing angel, Signor Cadama ! I am, of course, entirely in the dark as to your reason for helping me, but that you mean to be generous I am convinced. Go ahead, therefore, and let me hear what you have to say. Fire away, my dear fellow !"

"Slowly—slowly, baron. There's luck in leisure you know, and there is no need for haste in this business. First—" he looked cautiously around the room before asking : "Is there any possibility of our being overheard ?"

"Not the slightest ! But speak in a low tone if what you have to say is a secret."

"It is, and the result might be fatal for us were any one to hear. That you will keep the secret I know, for it will be to your interest to do so."

The student drew a chair close to the Italian's side and seated himself.

"You excite my curiosity to a wonderful degree, signor."

"It shall soon be satisfied," smilingly returned the Italian, stroking his pointed beard. "Allow me first to ask a few more questions. You are, according to the *Almanach*, the sole representative of the Hackert-Selchern family ?"

"Certainly ; with the exception of my cousin, the daughter of my uncle, Colonel Von Hackert, who died not long ago. I am the only one living bearing the name."

"*Va bene!* Have you any idea how much your uncle, the colonel, was worth?"

"I can't give you the exact figure. I think, however, that it is not far from three hundred thousand dollars."

"And I," supplemented the *avvocato* with a peculiar twitching of his eyelids, "*know* the sum to be three times the amount you mention!"

"Thunder and lightning!" Again the student's fist descended upon the table with a force that made the worm-eaten boards quiver. "If that is true, then my uncle behaved most outrageously toward me! Do you know how much he gave me—me, his only male relation? Sixty thousand marks—I swear it! Signor Cadama, a beggarly sixty thousand marks that will not come into my possession either until I submit my neck to the matrimonial yoke."

"Then you would better marry at once," with a touch of irony suggested the advocate.

"That is said easily enough, my dear *signor*; but who, in the devil's name, would undertake to share my beggar's lot? I can't insult my good old name by leading to the altar the first marriageable female I meet! Heaven knows I cast from me, long ago, many of the prejudices of rank; but to marry a girl of obscure origin in order to secure an unimportant legacy, I can't do it—no, sir! The name which was distinguished prior to Acron and Nicopolis is still a trifle too dear to me."

A slight wrinkle appeared for a moment between the advocate's brows. Evidently it did not suit his plans to find in this vagabond student a remnant of family pride. He adjusted his cravat, then drew his lips into the stereotyped smile usual to them, and said:

"It would be a pity, too, if a young gentleman like yourself were not allowed to follow his inclinations. But I should think it would be easy enough for you to

find a wife who is your social equal. How, for instance, would your cousin suit? You would be a very rich man then."

"If you have no other business with me, *signor*, than to offer inane suggestions, you may spare yourself further trouble," rudely returned the student. "Do you imagine that I am eager to be shown the door by my haughty kinswoman, and the feminine Cerberus who guards her? I guess not! Moreover, my worthy man of law, I want you to know that my cousin Lucia could transform for me the musical sound of a half-million gold coins into a very discordant noise! Lucia is my nearest relative, but I haven't the least atom of affection for her. I may be wrong in saying it, but it's the truth, and that's all there is about it!"

Again the advocate passed his long white hand over his beard:

"Then I may, without further hesitation, tell you the object of my visit," he said slowly, the syllables seeming to slide from his thin lips. "Don't be shocked at the disclosures I am compelled to make. Startling as they may seem, they are true. Your dislike of Miss Lucia is perfectly natural, for the girl is your bitterest enemy. *Not one drop of Hackert blood flows in her veins!* She is not the daughter of your deceased uncle, whose legal heir is—yourself!"

Several moments passed before the student recovered from the effects of this astounding revelation. He seemed stunned—like a thunderbolt the advocate's words had fallen on him. He had been prepared for anything—everything else but this most incredible intelligence. It rarely happened that he lost his self-possession; but it was only after a severe struggle that he succeeded in composing himself sufficiently to say in a voice whose vibrations were clearly perceptible:

"I can't boast a knowledge of human nature ; but I don't think you are the sort of man to deceive one unless there was something to be gained by it ; and what could you gain from *me* ? The most crafty usurer could win nothing from me ! You must have learned, while acquiring all the particulars relating to our family affairs, that my debts far exceed my income. I have, therefore, no reason to mistrust you. I believe your object in coming to me is honest enough. What I don't believe is the silly tale you have told me. Somebody has been imposing on you."

"Do you imagine, baron," returned the Roman, fixing his keen eyes on the student's face, "that a mere conjecture would have sufficient force to draw me to Berlin ? If you care to learn anything concerning my character, just take the trouble to wire to any of the information bureaus in Rome or direct to the *Tribunale reale* if you like. You will likely be told that I am the most unscrupulous, and at the same time most sagacious and best informed advocate in the Tiber city. I am thus candid because I want you to understand that I never undertake to follow a clue unless the end is clearly in sight ! I should not have hunted you up had not I possessed proofs—yes, *proofs*, baron !—that you are the only living person having the right to the name of Hackert-Selchern, and that the girl you call your cousin is nothing more or less than a—nameless beggar !"

There was something so convincing in the advocate's tone and manner that, extraordinary as were his words, the student doubted them no longer. He looked closely at the Italian. The lean, bird-like head with its keen eyes indicated shrewdness and profound thought. In truth, a man like Cadama would not build on a sand dune, *his* foundation would be sure to be laid on the

rock of certainty ! The advocate might be an unscrupulous knave—he himself admitted as much—but he certainly was not a fool.

Hackert's manner had undergone a complete change ; his levity had vanished, and an expression of deliberate cunning and malice had settled on his dissipated face. He folded his arms over his broad chest, and leaning indolently back in his chair said :

“ You can imagine, signor, how seriously I am affected by your disclosures. It is of course but natural that I should wish to get possession of what is legally mine. I trust, therefore, that you will confide in me everything you know concerning this very singular affair ? ”

Cadama nodded.

“ Certainly, I shall tell you, but before I begin, I must remind you that in order to gain our object, we must go to work with great caution—in secret, like the mole under the earth ! ‘ Four eyes see more than two,’ is a Piedmontese saying, and we two will be able to accomplish more than one. But we must never for a moment lose sight of the fact that the utmost secrecy is to be preserved—it is the unconditional factor for the success of our undertaking. Another matter, baron. You have heard the maxim, ‘ No pay no profit.’ Before I unravel the mystery, I must ask you to sign a document. It contains, as you will see, nothing more than a promise to pay me—in case you come into possession of your uncle's *entire* fortune—the sum of fifty thousand dollars. I have a second contract, between yourself and a certain Francisco Boccani, who is closely connected with this matter. The latter paper, however, I will lay before you when you have heard all that I have to say. Will you have the kindness to sign here ? ”

He unfolded the paper he took from his letter-case,

and spread it on the table in front of the student. Then, having noted that the appliances for the proper signing of a legal document were not to be had in this singular dwelling—the ink had long vanished from the inkstand which lay on the floor, and the only pen was thickly coated with rust—he took from the inexhaustible letter-case a tiny bottle of ink, and unscrewed from his watch-chain a peculiar charm that was quickly transformed into a pen. These he handed to the student, who, after a careful perusal of the document, proceeded to attach his signature. His usual careless manner had vanished. He was almost painfully particular in writing the name he had so often scribbled illegibly on his due-bill.

Signor Cadama waited until the ink was dry. Then he folded the paper and laid it in the mysterious letter-case, which he returned to his pocket, saying :

“And now, baron, we will have the story.”





## CHAPTER VIII.

### FEAR AND SUSPENSE.

"Is this final, counselor?"

"It is. I have nothing more to say, lieutenant."

Counselor Dreyfuss regretted the hasty reply the moment it had fallen from his lips. He had seen the look of pain which came into the young officer's blue eyes, and was sorry for him. He stepped close to his side and laid his broad hand in a fatherly manner on the lieutenant's shoulder. In a way he was fond of the young fellow, and wished him well. But as a husband for his niece and heiress—that was another thing! A mere lieutenant was not nearly "high" enough.

"I must explain, my dear Doring," he said in an apologetic tone. "I dare say I was a trifle hasty. I honor and admire you. I am convinced that you are a thoroughly honorable man and capable of making any woman happy. If I refuse to give you my Annie, it is because I have a special reason for so doing. Annie is as dear to us as if she were really our daughter, and it would be like tearing away part of ourselves to give her up. Besides, the child is still very young. She is not old enough to take upon herself the cares of married life. She can stay with us for several years longer

without fearing she may die an old maid ! Allow me to make a proposition, my dear Doring. Come to me a year from now, and if I am still of the same opinion, then come again in another year. True love is lasting, and— Why, bless my soul, lad, you are far enough from being an old man, and still have before you the happiest days of your life !”

The lieutenant felt the blood surge through his veins. A hot wave rushed to his brain ; he struggled manfully with his agitation.

He had not expected to win without a fierce struggle the girl he loved with all the strength of his honest heart. He had told himself that it would take a deal of argument to convince the counselor of his honest intentions. He knew, from Annie herself, that her uncle looked with suspicion on every suitor for the hand of his heiress. He firmly believed that every one speculated on the young girl's future inheritance. But Doring had believed that he would in the end succeed in convincing the counselor that his desire to make Annie his wife was not prompted by mercenary views, and his belief had been strengthened by the knowledge that Annie returned his love and had confessed it to her uncle. And now every one of his hopes was rudely dispelled by the counselor's words and manner, in which he saw plainly enough that further pleading would be useless. Evidently it was true that the ambitious old gentleman desired for his niece a husband with “blue blood.”

“If you knew how cruelly you wound me by your words, counselor,” after a pause said the young officer, “you would speak differently. I know very well what the proposition you offer means. I should ask as vainly the second and the third time as I do now. I am not the sort of husband you would select for your niece,

because I am simply a penniless soldier. That I love Annie with all my heart counts as nothing in the eyes of the millionaire who expects to buy with his gold a coronet ; or, perhaps, even the noble escutcheon of a count ! I have nothing, counselor, but a sound head and two vigorous arms that can earn enough to support a wife ; but, poor as I am, I despise your money, and want none of it. I ask only for Annie, who loves me as I love her."

Herr Dreyfuss leaned against the table beside which he was standing, and toyed nervously with the ornaments on his fob-chain. The lieutenant's independent words and manner angered him. Was this a proper tone to use toward him ? Offended vanity triumphed. The counselor elevated his brows, and twirling the fob-chain swiftly around his forefinger, said, with a sneer :

"I must confess, Lieutenant Doring, that I am astonished at the very remarkable meaning you give to my words—very much astonished indeed ! You seem to forget that I occupy the place of Annie's father ; that I have a right to watch over her welfare and to advise when it concerns the most important step of her life. If I refuse to give you Annie it is because I have a good reason—"

"Then, pray, at least let me hear it," interrupted Doring, in desperation. "Annie is twenty-one, consequently of age, and her own mistress. You surely cannot forbid her to marry simply because you want to keep her with you a few years longer ! I beg your pardon, counselor, if I speak excitedly, but I cannot rest content with your answer. I must know why you refuse to give me Annie's hand."

"Because I think it is for the best, my young gentleman !" angrily responded the counselor, his broad face

aflame. "Am I bound to account to you for my actions? You ask me a question that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no,' and I say: 'No'—and mean it!"

For a full minute Doring remained silent. His head was bent on his heaving chest, where shone the medals won in the campaigns of 1866-70, beside the iron cross for bravery.

At last he raised his head. His face had grown pale as marble; he breathed heavily.

"I have nothing further to say, counselor," he returned, forcing himself to speak calmly. "I hope that Heaven may not punish too severely your obdurate pride. Such pride must suffer sooner or later."

He did not wait to hear the counselor's irate rejoinder, but bowed mutely, and hastily quitted the room.

"Incredible! Incredible!" muttered Herr Dreyfuss, excitedly pacing the floor. "This beggarly lieutenant acts as if I ought to consider his desire to marry my Annie an honor! Humph! I haven't managed to rise to my position for nothing! I haven't heaped up dollars for nothing! We shall find a husband for our girl, and we don't want epaulettes, either!" he paused an instant, and deliberated, then continued: "He isn't a bad sort, this Doring, quite the contrary! I always liked him; if I hadn't, I should have told him long ago to shut my door on his back with himself outside! But if he imagines that he has only to stretch out his hand to take my Annie— *Donnerwetter!* Why he's mistaken, that's all! If he were a major, or even a captain, I might shut my eyes to the rest, but a mere lieutenant. No, sir! Annie can get a dozen such! I fancy I may with justice claim some reward for the long years of toil and economy, economy which enabled me to lay by enough to buy a count's escutcheon,

or a baron's coronet, as this ruffianly lieutenant had the impertinence to say to me. I haven't any such views, my young gentleman, but—"

He paused again, and sank anew into deep meditation. He laid his hand, on which glittered and scintillated a valuable diamond, against his double chin, and fixed his eyes thoughtfully on the carpet.

"Menken is a distinguished man," he muttered after awhile, continuing his monologue. "He belongs to the nobility; has held high office at court; has the right to wear a captain's uniform. He's a handsome fellow, too, and a favorite in the highest circles. H-m!—h-m!—I, too, might then get an invitation occasionally to court, and why not? Menken might even manage to get me a title."

So intent upon his ambitious soaring was the counselor, that he did not hear the door open, or see his niece until she was close by his side.

He started and looked with some confusion down into the girl's flushed, and tear-stained face.

"Why, Annie, my dear child! What is the matter? You look—you *have* been crying!"

"I met Hans in the hall after he left you," returned Annie, hanging her head.

"Hans?" repeated the counselor, who knew very well whom his niece meant, but he was in no mood to tolerate such intimacy. "And who pray is Hans?"

"You know very well, uncle—Lieutenant Doring."

"Oh! And may I inquire who gives you the right to call this gentleman, who insults your uncle to his very face, by his first name?"

The flush on Annie's face deepened.

"My love for him gives me the right, uncle," she returned in a firm tone, fearlessly meeting the old gentleman's glance. "I love Hans, and shall always love

him, even at the risk of appearing ungrateful in your eyes."

"Incredible, by heaven! Incredible!" bellowed the counselor. "Do you imagine, you silly child, that you can bully me into submission by such a declaration? I, too, was young once, and can understand how easily a warm heart yields to a folly. I knew very well what I was doing when I told this impertinent lieutenant he was not the proper match for you. Thank heaven, you have some one to advise and counsel you when the most important question of your life needs an answer!"

"I know, dear uncle, that I owe you very much," in a low tone returned Annie, repressing the tears which rose anew to her eyes. "You took me, a fatherless, motherless child, into your home and heart, and brought me up as your own daughter. That I love you as dearly as I could an own father is the least I can do to show my gratitude. But, uncle, there is a limit to all things. My sorrowful childhood taught me to depend on myself, to decide for myself; and cheerfully as I would yield to you in everything else, willingly as I would follow your advice in all other matters, in this I must choose for myself."

"Which means, to express it in less poetical language," sneered the counselor, "that you intend to marry Lieutenant Doring?"

"Yes, uncle; because I love him, and am convinced that I shall be happy with him."

Herr Dreyfuss laughed—a laugh that had nothing in it of the usual joyous sound. It was harsh and scornful.

"Listen to me, Annie," he said. "It is the last time I shall mention this subject to you. I want you, therefore, to receive my words as seriously as I speak them. Love is an illusion—a deceptive image without solid

foundation. We live in an age in which the poetical citation : 'There's room in the smallest cot,' and so forth, has lost its meaning. Your own personal fortune is small. Döring has nothing but his pay. You have always been told that you will some day inherit everything I own—everything I have struggled for years to accumulate. But—now listen, Annie—I have not the least desire or intention to support with my hard-earned savings any one who enters my family against my wishes. Therefore, I declare that, in case you persist in marrying this beggarly lieutenant, you shall not receive one penny—not one !”

The counselor had intended by this curious declaration to frighten his niece. That his words failed in their effect he very soon perceived. A brave smile played around Annie's lips, and an enthusiastic light beamed in her eyes as she replied :

“You are mistaken, uncle, if you imagine we counted on receiving any money from you. On the contrary, we have made all our plans to get on without it—”

“Indeed ?” interrupted the counselor, becoming more and more excited. “You seem to have carried this matter pretty far, my dear. Perhaps you can tell me also how the lieutenant proposes to support you—as a conductor on the tram-cars, or, perhaps, as a clerk ?”

Without another word Annie turned and walked proudly from the room, leaving her enraged guardian to resume his furious promenade alone.

She went to her own room and seated herself at the writing-table, a determined look on her rather plain face. For several minutes her pen passed swiftly over the sheet of note-paper. Then, when she had finished, she read what she had written.

There were only a few lines, as follows :

“DEAR HANS: You are right—uncle is inexorable, and further pleading would be useless. We must, therefore, act for ourselves. You know, my beloved, that I am ready to do whatever you decide, that I will go wheresoever you wish to take me. Your future is mine. You told me once I was a shrewd, independent and energetic girl. If I have not yet been so, I shall strive to become so, in order to bear courageously any trials we may meet. Pray decide for me.

“Your loving and faithful

ANNIE.”

Annie sealed the letter, and herself posted it at the nearest street corner. Shortly after she had returned to the house, her uncle sallied forth and took his way to the residence of Baron Von Menken.





## CHAPTER IX.

### REMINISCENCES.

A bright fire crackled on the hearth in Baron Von Menken's private sitting-room, in which reigned an unusual disorder. The impression one would have received on entering the room was that the baron, who was sitting in front of the fire, was about to start on a long journey, for three large travelling trunks stood in the middle of the floor. But the baron was not thinking of wandering—at least not in person. He had suddenly conceived the desire to look over his old papers, letters, diaries and other documents belonging to the past, and had ordered his valet to fetch the trunks from the attic.

"No, the baron was not going on a journey ; only his thoughts would wander over various parts of the globe, would revisit the scenes of the past.

It had always been a hobby of the baron's to preserve everything that was of the least interest ; consequently, the mass of accumulated matter of all sorts, sizes, shapes and character, formed no inconsiderable bulk.

The black-leather trunk, with brass nails, contained souvenirs of the baron's youth. Here slumbered innumerable packets of perfumed *billets d'amour*, tied with blue ribbon; rolls of passionate sonnets; fragments of ball-gowns; broken fans; faded flowers and crushed cotillion-favors.

Equally important were the contents of the second box. Of more value than either of the others, however, were the contents of the third and most worm-eaten trunk—the one with a seal-skin cover. Within its bristly covering was confined a world of romance, slumbered a flood of recollections, were imprisoned a multitude of demons, goblins and elves.

This trunk was the first Menken opened. From the chaos of papers which fell toward him amid a stifling cloud of dust, was a pamphlet of the thickness of a finger. On the cover was written: "War Diary, 1866."

Menken had not taken active part in this campaign, but had accompanied it, entrusted with a secret political mission. Thus it happened that the diary contained mention not only of military facts, but recorded various diplomatic occurrences which had been enacted, during the fateful "seven days," behind the scenes of the theatre of war.

These entries, however, were not what attracted Menken's attention. He had long ago wearied of the political intrigues of the nation, as well as of the miniature battles at the various courts; and such reading possessed no more interest for him. Therefore, he cast merely a passing glance at the records of political happenings and read only those of a purely personal character.

"Between Podol and Schweinschädel, June 26-29," he read, leaning far back in his chair, and with the

diary shielding his face from the blaze on the hearth. "This incessant firing between the two armies is becoming very tiresome, and I shall be heartily glad when our brave prince wins the victory. I long for the flesh-pots of Egypt, for the comforts of my home! I feel that I have grown too effeminate for a soldier's life. A bundle of straw for a bed may suit a rough warrior like Hilgersdorf; I prefer my feather-bed to such a barbarous couch! And the dinners! Talbout, my wise old Talbout, thou most excellent of *chefs*, how I miss thee! Thy tender gastronomic soul would recoil with horror were thine eye but to catch a single glimpse of the monstrosities our mess-room cook serves up as *côtelettes de mouton*, did thy nose sniff but once the diabolic aroma which arises from his *fines herbes* sauce! Hilgersdorf avers that he never eat better chops than those served by Knusperbein. Ye gods, what a name for a *chef de cuisine*! But then, the lank major's tastes for the delicacies of the kitchen are not so fine as those for feminine beauty—as the occurrence of yesterday goes to prove. That affair is worthy a record in these pages.

"We—that is the general, with his two adjutants; the colonel, who has the face of a Miltiades; Major Hilgersdorf and his obese partner and several other of the staff officers, to whom I may with becoming modesty attach myself as 'diplomatic-fowl'—were sitting in the mess-tent after dinner.

"The Rothspon, which Miltiades had unearthed from some cellar in the neighborhood, was not bad, and the asthmatic captain's cigars were tolerable. We were preparing to enjoy pleasant hours when a noise was heard outside, and directly afterward an excitable young ordnance officer rushed into the tent and announced that he had captured a female spy.

"A female spy? *Sapperment*, that was an event which did not happen every day! The general hastily donned his helmet; the colonel, major and captain did the same; only I hesitated to crown myself with the rather shabby campaign-cap which was my property. Instead, I sought to give my countenance the serious expression warranted by the occasion.

"Thus we received the supposed spy, who was conducted into the tent much as a circus horse is led into the ring. I believed another mistake had been made, as several suspected persons who had been brought into camp had proved to be innocent peasants, and expected to see another old woman, a village gossip that had roused the suspicions of our brave fusiliers. You may imagine my astonishment when I beheld the young woman who was forcibly led into our improvised *salon*. Yes, a young woman, with the dusky beauty and gleaming eyes of Meyerbeer's *Africaine*, and not unlike Lucca when she first appears in that *rôle*. From the soles of her tiny bare feet to her blue-black hair, which was tied back with a red ribbon, the woman was a beauty! That she was a child of the south, perhaps of gypsy blood, one could see at a glance. It is only very rarely that our northern sun paints such gold-brown tints on cheek and neck; gives such brilliant hues to lips and hair.

"I was lost in admiration of the lovely creature who, when she came nearer, suddenly gave utterance to an exclamation and, with her eyes aflame, stretched both hands toward the rear of the tent.

"'La!—la!'

"Every glance was at once directed toward the spot where stood Major Hilgersdorf, a derisive smile on his bearded lip, an angry frown wrinkling his brows. An amusing thought rose in my mind. I laughed involun-

tarily. Hilgersdorf shot one furious glance at me, then with his finger against his helmet turned to the general.

“‘Pardon, your excellency. This is rather embarrassing for me. I am afraid I am the innocent cause of this disturbance. This woman is no spy, but a harmless lunatic. I met her by accident at Podol, since which time she has persisted in annoying me. An Austrian told me parts of her history. She is an Italian, and in charge of sutler’s stores accompanied Garibaldi’s army in ’59. She fell in love with a German, who was afterward shot by one of her countrymen, and that caused her derangement. With your excellency’s permission I will speak to her.’

“The general smilingly shook his finger at Hilgersdorf.

“‘Major, major!’ he repeated in a low tone. ‘A Don Juan on the battlefield? What if this became known in Berlin? But I will excuse you this once, only don’t let it occur a second time. Take the girl away, lovely women, though they be not spies, bring only trouble.’

“Hilgersdorf bowed; one could see by the expression on his harsh features how he had received his superior’s mild reprimand.

“The general asked a few questions of the ordnance officer, and very soon became convinced that the poor woman, had been arrested without cause. Then he nodded a dismissal to Hilgersdorf, who said to the woman, in fluent Italian, I was surprised to hear.

“‘Come with me, Carmella; I want to speak to you,’ and willingly, like a carefully educated dog, the poor creature followed him.”

The hand in which Baron Menken held the diary here sank to his knee. He rested his head against the back of the chair, closed his eyes, and let his thoughts

wander amid the scenes of the past which had been recalled by this record in his diary.

“A number of German officers were quartered, after the capitulation on the 16th of February, 1871, in a castle near Belfort, which belonged to Vicomte Saint-Estain.

“The *château*, whose proprietor, a French nobleman who, notwithstanding the threatening and hostile aspect of the environment, had persisted in remaining in his home, to-day had more the appearance of a barrack than a gentleman's villa—a barrack, however, that contained all the modern conveniences and luxuries.

“The *vicomte*, a man of thirty-odd, of distinguished appearance and manner, hospitable and generous, had received his uninvited guests as cordially as if they were his most welcome friends. Wine flowed in such bountiful streams, the table groaned under such an abundance of delicacies that the Germans wondered how their courteous host managed to procure such stores in that famished neighborhood.

“The *vicomte* himself, however, rarely joined his guests in their feasting, a breach of etiquette perfectly understood and commended by the victorious officers.

“On that eventful day, the 16th of February, most of the officers quartered at the *château* withdrew to their own rooms, after a dinner that would have tickled the palate of a Lucullus. The fatigues of the last days had been trying, and the officers knew not what might yet be in store for them. Consequently they sought a much-needed rest. A few, however, of the hardier ones remained longer over their cigars and coffee; and of these few a majority presently repaired to the card-room to indulge in a game of hazard.

“Four players took seats around the card-table. The

bank was in charge of a tall, strikingly lean man wearing the uniform of a lieutenant—a man with a shaggy mustache, of bilious complexion and harsh features, which even an occasional rude laugh could not soften.

“Facing the lieutenant sat a friend of the *vicomte's*, who happened to be staying at the *château*. The Marquis Du Cat was a man who showed to the enemies of his country only his most amiable side. He was a cavalier from crown to sole. At first his betting had been very moderate, but he very soon increased his ventures when he found that his companions were willing to do so.

“The other players were a major of the staff and a cavalry captain, an athletic fellow of powerful proportions.

“The lieutenant was very lucky—quite the opposite of the tall cavalry officer.

“‘Well, baron, do you wish to stop now, that you may preserve your luck in love?’ banteringly inquired the lieutenant.

“The captain started and frowned. There was something like a sneer in the lieutenant’s allusion to the old adage.

“‘I am not superstitious, Herr Hilgersdorf,’ he returned quietly. ‘But as I have lost three thousand dollars to you—all my ready cash, I confess—perhaps I would better stop.’

“‘If that is your only reason, you may as well continue in the game,’ returned the lieutenant. ‘I am perfectly willing to take your I O U, you know.’

“The captain glanced in a peculiar manner toward the speaker as he thrust his hand into his breast-pocket and drew forth a note-book. He penciled several figures on a blank page, tore it out, and tossed it carelessly into one of the divisions chalked on the table. The paper fell into the space marked ‘*rouge*.’

"Lieutenant Hilgersdorf glanced at the figures, then turned up the card :

"*'Noir gagne, rouge perd!'* You are unlucky to-day, baron,' he observed, with a peculiar twitch of his eyelid. Then he took up the I O U and read aloud :

"*'Good for three thousand!'* Adding, in a lower tone to the baron : *'You are very imprudent !'*

"*'Beg pardon. lieutenant,'* was the curt response, *'but that is my affair ! Will you accept any more due-bills?'*

"The lieutenant nodded assent, and the baron tossed into *'rouge'* another note-sheet on which he had scribbled :

"*'Double the former sum.'*

"Again the cards fell, and again red was the loser.

"The athletic captain's face flushed slightly ; he bit his lip and again reached for his note-book.

"*'Don't be offended, captain,'* said Hilgersdorf, *'but really my conscience will not permit me to accept any more high stakes. I cannot, indeed I cannot take any more.'*

"A sarcastic smile passed over his opponent's face :

"*'Pray, don't be afraid,'* he returned shortly, flinging the third sheet on *rouge*. *'There are ten thousand as a last venture.'*

"Two crimson spots appeared on Hilgersdorf's thin cheeks. He shuffled the cards, the marquis cut, and the game was renewed.

"At this moment the major, a slender, grave-featured man, who was seated behind Herr Von Hilgersdorf, rose noisily and strode toward the door.

"The captain looked up quietly, and inquired :

"*'Where to, my dear Hackert?'*

"*'To duty!'* was the brief response ; but brief as it



"YOU SEEM TO HAVE CARRIED THIS MATTER PRETTY FAR!"—See Page 87.



was, the captain fancied that the voice which pronounced it trembled perceptibly.

"The door closed, and with the clicking scound of the latch came Hilgersdorf's monotonous :

"*Noir gagne, rouge perd !*"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Night had fallen on Château Saint-Estain—a dark, starless, winter night.

"Outside, in front of the castle gates, paced the guards, their deep collars upturned to ward off the snow flakes, which were driven by the keen north wind into a whirling dance. The windows of the castle were dark—all except one at the extreme corner. Here a faint light glimmered, and beyond the frosted panes might be seen, at intervals, the dark outlines of a tall form. It was the baron. Two days before he had ridden almost twenty-four leagues, and had hardly rested any since then ; but he could not sleep to-night. The chaotic thoughts, coursing so wildly through his brain, banished slumber from his eyes.

"On the table by his bedside lay a loaded pistol. Twice already he had stopped beside the table and taken the weapon in his hand. What would be the result were he to place the cold muzzle against his temple and press the trigger ? A report, a little cloud of smoke, and the world would be rid of one more disappointed life.

"The war had broken out just at the right moment for this mad baron, whom neither the dust of legal documents nor the frivolity of court life, neither diplomatic quibbles nor the seclusion of his Lusation *château* could satisfy.

"Here, there, everywhere he had squandered money for amusements, luxuries, imprudent charities—senselessly, thoughtlessly—until there came an end to his

money, as well as to his enjoyment of such a life. At this time the turmoil along the Rhine began. Could anything have happened more opportunely for him, who was at a loss which way to turn, than this war with its hundred and one contingencies ?

“Of *one* contingency, however, the baron never dreamed—that he, always the most fortunate of players, should one day meet the demon of ill luck ! A bullet in his heart, a sword-cut on his dead, shattered limbs—any of these he had believed probable ; but ill-luck at cards, never ! Like all men of the world the baron was fond of games of hazard. He played cautiously, therefore successfully in the main. Only once he had neglected his usual caution, and that once had wrecked his honor.

“Yes, that was the plain fact, and the baron did not try to conceal it from himself. In the brief space of five minutes he had lost nineteen thousand dollars, a sum that, according to the inexorable law among men of honor, would have to be paid before the evening of the coming day, and he could not claim even a third of the amount.

“He knew very well that Hilgersdorf was a merciless gamester, of whom it was said in confidential circles that he played with a professional rigor that had brought him a considerable fortune.

“The baron’s situation was a desperate one. In vain he tortured his brain for a comforting thought ; none came to his relief. He opened the door to let in some fresh air from the ice-cold corridor. What noise was that ? He was certain he had heard a whisper and a stealthy footstep. He listened a moment at the open door, then stepped back into the room, took the lamp in one hand, his pistol in the other, and went into the corridor.

"Here two foes confronted each other. Germany and France ! The full light of the baron's lamp fell on the slender form and white face of the Vicomte de Saint-Estain who held firmly pressed against his breast a packet of papers. His other hand grasped a revolver.

"Saint-Estain was deathly pale, but his keen eyes unflinchingly returned the baron's challenging glance.

" 'I am a guest in your house, *vicomte*,' said the German officer, 'but my uniform compels me to ask what you are doing here, and what are those papers?'

"The *vicomte* drew a deep breath and replied.

" 'You shall have an account of my actions, *monsieur*, but let us first come into your room.'

"He stepped to one side as he spoke, and revealed the slender lad who had been standing behind him. The youth was clad in the uniform of Prussia, but that he was no Prussian the baron saw at a glance. A disquieting suspicion flashed through the German officer's brain, the *vicomte* noticed his hesitation and said smilingly.

" 'You may take my revolver. I have no other arms.'

"The baron waved aside the extended weapon, and by a gesture invited the Frenchman to enter his room. When the door was closed, Saint-Estain turned toward the baron. An iron determination rested on his thin, dark face ; he breathed heavily and deeply for several seconds before speaking.

" 'Permit me, *monsieur*,' he began in his usual courteous tones, 'to make a proposition. If you will allow this lad to go free, and do not ask to examine these papers, I will give you one hundred thousand francs !'

"The baron started as if shot.

“ ‘ *Vicomte !* ’

“ Saint-Estain drew from his pocket a letter-case and laid it on the table.”

The “ Diary of 1866 ” had fallen unheeded from Baron Von Menken’s hand to the floor. His thoughts were far away. Château de Saint-Estain stood before his spiritual eyes, while scene after scene of that drama of the past was enacted anew in his memory.

He saw again the *vicomte*, on the fateful night, standing before him, heard again the courteous tone.

“ ‘ Don’t misunderstand me, *monsieur*, this is merely a matter of business between you and me. I give you my word of honor that I do not even know your name, nor do I want to know it. Why should you read these papers which, perhaps, compromise me, and which are of no personal interest to you? You can do so if you insist—*c’est la guerre !* But it will be a thankless task. Time presses, *monsieur*. ’ The *vicomte* looked uneasily at his watch. ‘ Here,’ laying his hand on the letter-case, ‘ are one hundred thousand francs. Let us go ! ’

“ What a flood of sensations had overwhelmed him in that brief moment ! What could those papers contain ? And why should the Frenchman offer so enormous a sum to protect them from strange eyes ?

“ But why need he ask—he who stood on the verge of an abyss ? Was not this a rescuing hand stretched out to him ? Was not this his vanished good luck returning to him ? Would it be wrong to take this money, which would redeem his honor ?

“ ‘ Yes, yes, it would be wrong ! ’ his conscience had cried aloud. ‘ It would be wrong, for you suspect, you *know*, that this Frenchman means harm to your fatherland—*c’est la guerre !* ’

“ But his honor was wrecked here or there—

"The baron forcibly straightened himself, laid his hand on the letter-case, and said in a toneless voice :

" 'You may go !' "

"The door opened and closed, then all was again silent. Deathly pale, trembling in every limb, with eyes wildly staring, the baron looked about him. Had he been dreaming ? No, he felt the banknotes rustle in his trembling fingers.

"Deeply agitated, he resumed his pacing, and sought to regain his usual calm by assuring himself that the *vicomte's* papers contained only family secrets ; that he would prevent any harmful result by keeping a close watch on the *vicomte's* movements.

"The reaction came at last, and, dressed as he was, the baron flung himself on the bed and closed his eyes.

"It was yet early dawn when he started from a deep sleep. He thought he had heard a knock at his door. The lamp had gone out. Pale leaden shadows filled the room and outlined curious forms on walls and ceiling. The wood on the hearth had burned to ashes ; it was icy cold in the room.

"Again there came a knock on the door. The baron rose wearily, thrust the banknotes into the table-drawer and opened the door.

"An officer, wrapped in a riding-cloak that was covered with snow, with muddy boots on his feet, stood before him and held out his hand.

" 'Grüss Gott, comrade !' he saluted heartily. 'This is an unusual hour for calling, but I am just returned from Belfort, and want to see you on business of the utmost importance.'

"The baron started. He was becoming mistrustful.

" 'Come in Hackert,' he returned. 'You must be half-frozen. I have a bottle of Madeira—it will warm you.'

"He opened the bottle, filled two glasses, and giving one to the major, emptied the other at a draught.

"Major Von Hackert sipped his slowly; his face was very serious.

" 'You lost a large sum to Hilgersdorf last night,' he began, after an uncomfortable pause. 'I want to ask you, nay, I beg you, not to play again with him. I have reason to mistrust him.'

"The captain looked up in surprise.

" 'What do you mean?' he asked. 'I don't think I understand you.'

" 'I will tell you. I have known Hilgersdorf longer than you have; indeed, I was once quite intimate with him, years ago, before he had yielded so entirely to his corrupt nature. Twelve years ago he was in Italy on business connected with the war department, and I was there at the same time with my invalid wife. It was then I learned that Hilgersdorf is not the sort of man who is an honor to our army. Yesterday evening—don't be startled, my dear baron—I distinctly saw that he was cheating you.'

" 'An officer! My dear Hackert! Impossible!' incredulously ejaculated the captain.

"The major shrugged his shoulders.

" 'There are knaves in all professions, my dear fellow. But let me go on. You know that Hilgersdorf and the Marquis du Cat—that disagreeable Frenchman whose "accidental" presence in the *château* directly after the capitulation roused my suspicions—are old acquaintances. They met years ago in Rome. Well, I believe this marquis to be a rogue, and I am convinced that he and Hilgersdorf were in league to cheat you last night. There is a difference between the cheating of a common plow-boy and that of a *corriger la fortune*. Morally they are the same—externally not. Had I de-

tected Hilgersdorf last night in any of the awkward expedients resorted to by the ordinary blackleg, I should have seized the cards from his hands and flung them into his face. Didn't you notice that Hilgersdorf invariably gave the cut to the marquis—not once to you? I suspected mischief at once, but as I had no convincing proof of their villainy, and as I am aware of my violent temper, I preferred to leave the room to starting a brawl. Hilgersdorf saw that you persisted in playing on *rouge*, and shuffled accordingly, giving the cut to the marquis. You know the result. It is easy enough for two sharpers playing in league to cheat an unsuspecting third party. I tell you this, my dear Menken, because I honestly believe Hilgersdorf to be a miscreant, and because I want you to promise not to play again with him.'

" 'I promise, my dear Hackert, not only that I will never again play with him, but I will never—so long as I live—touch another card !'

" The major's smile was a trifle incredulous; but he said heartily :

" 'All the better, comrade; all the better for you ! God help you to keep your vow ! All games of hazard are inventions of the devil. And now, another thing : You will have to smile on your ill-luck and pay your debt—that can't be avoided, cheating or no cheating ! It won't hurt you to be cramped a bit ! You are said to be a rich man ; but, fearing you might not have at your convenience the required sum, I have taken the liberty to bring you this. You know it would be horribly disagreeable to have to ask Hilgersdorf to wait—Why ! Great Heaven ! What is the matter ? My dear baron !'

" The baron had leaned suddenly back in his chair ; his face was pallid, great drops of cold perspiration

stood on his face. Oh, had this saving hand been extended a few hours earlier !

“ ‘Nothing—only a—momentary illness,’ he gasped, with trembling lips. ‘I am—very tired. I overexerted myself by my long ride.’ He filled his glass and emptied it slowly before adding, in a deeply earnest tone : ‘I shall never—*never*, my dear friend, forget this hour ! I accept your generous loan with a gratitude too deep for expression. I may not be able to pay you for several weeks, for I—I am not so rich as it is supposed.’

“ ‘Because,’ jestingly supplemented the major, to hide his own emotion, ‘Providence has bestowed on me too large a share of the earth’s treasure. But let us drop the subject.’

“A few hours later Captain Von Menken sent his card to the Vicomte de Saint-Estain, requesting an interview. A heavy load had been removed from the captain’s heart. He would return the *vicomte’s* money, and anything further would be decided by the moment.

“But the *vicomte* was not to be found. He had gone out—so said the servant—with the Marquis du Cat.

“On the morning of the 18th a picket-guard was stationed about Château de Saint-Estain to the great surprise of its inmates, which was increased when the general in command of the troops quartered there in person examined the house from top to bottom, from *salon* to cellar, searching every cupboard, closet and chest ; turning over everything not nailed fast.

“It was not learned until later, however, that on the night of the 17th, one of the outposts had fired at a balloon, which seemed to have risen from the Court of Château de Saint-Estain.

“The guard’s bullet, which tore a rent in the balloon

and caused it to sink to the earth, fatally wounded one of the two occupant. The other one sent a ball into his own brain, preferring to share death with his companion to imprisonment by the Germans. From the packet of papers found on the person of one of the aëronauts, it was learned that they were the Counts Charles and Heribert de Saint-Estain; and that they were to arrange a secret mode of communication between the *château* and General Bourboki.

“In that hour Captain Von Menken learned the contents of the fatal documents he had cause to remember with such horror.

“The scene changes from the Château de Saint-Estain to a small ward in the barrack-hospital of a Rhenish city. On a cot, wounded nigh unto death, lay Major Von Hackert. Beside him, on a second bed of pain, rested the dreamer himself. The ‘mad baron’ had repaid the man who had rescued him from dishonor—had repaid him amid powder and smoke. Chance had so willed that Menken should save the major from a death that threatened him from the saber of a French soldier, but not without fearful injury to himself.

“The friendship of the two German officers was more firmly cemented in that sick-room; and thus it came about that the baron one day revealed to his comrade his whole past, without sparing himself, without keeping back one fact connected with the fateful February night in Château de Saint-Estain.

“That night had been the turning-point in the ‘mad baron’s’ frivolous life; it had changed the spendthrift and dissolute, if generous-hearted youth, to a silent, thoughtful, almost whimsical man.

“Sad hours lingered in that sick-room. The major’s wounds were threatening, and for a time the angel of

death hovered very near to the prostrate warrior. Those were anxious days and nights. Only when the lilacs outside the window began to bloom, and the robins every morning wakened the invalids from their slumbers, did the brave major begin to mend."

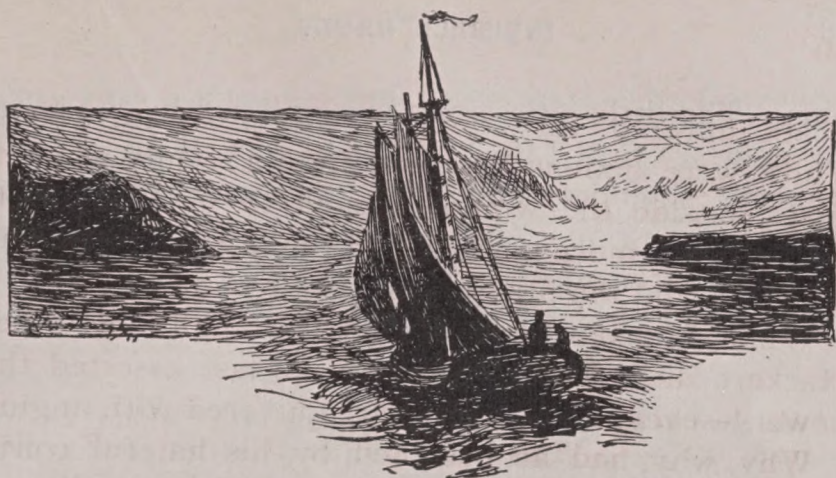
When Menken remembered the night his friend Hackert died—the old wounds at last asserted their power!—every fiber in his heart quivered with anguish.

Why, why, had he hastened, by his hateful conjecture, the dying soldier's end? And yet, when he recalled the scenes of the past, when he remembered what Hackert had confided to him during those hours of suffering in the hospital, he felt that his conjecture was true. Three images rose before him, and three names fell unconsciously from his lips:

"Carmella. Hilgersdorf. Lucia!"

The clock on the mantel struck nine. Baron Menken rose wearily, walked to his writing-table and, opening a secret drawer, took from it a securely tied packet of letters.





## CHAPTER X.

### GOSSIP.

In one of the upper rooms of the Café Bauer four gentlemen were seated around a table near the window. Herr Blenkner, Assessor Pringsberg, Doctor Rahlou and Herbert von Hackert were accustomed to meet here. The journalist to look over the newspapers, the other three to discuss, over a bowl of *mélange*, the latest scandal. They never were at a loss for a subject, and Doctor Rahlou not infrequently returned to the editorial rooms, richly laden with piquant items, and the next day Pringsberg would fly into a rage on reading one of his choicest bits of gossip in the doctor's column, but so elaborated that he hardly recognized it.

To-day again the assessor was very angry, and gave Rahlou plainly to understand that he was so. The journalist, however, merely shrugged his shoulders and retorted that it was the duty of the press to supply its readers with all the latest news and most interesting

items. The little altercation was enjoyed by the other two men. "Still-Life" Eugene was leaning over Hackert's shoulder, and with him was reading the article in question. One could see by their faces that they were entertained.

The article, which was signed "R" was as follows :

"WHAT LOVE WILL DO.

"We have in our city an affable young artist whom we will designate as E——. This young painter possesses great genius, so at least it is said by certain persons, though the offspring of this genius rarely finds a place in our art exhibitions. It is also said that the artist's attractive exterior, his elegant, always faultless attire, his pale, interesting face, dark languishing eyes, and curling brown locks, have much to do with his reputation for talent.

"There also dwells in our fair city a youthful and extremely beautiful widow, whom we may call I——. The beauty has passed only twenty years, but three of them—the last three—so filled with care and trouble that they would have annihilated any less elastic and buoyant nature.

"*La belle* I——'s deceased husband was one of those splenetic old men represented in the modern drama as a type of the *roué*. Happily, when the old gentleman died—after a brief, and, it may be understood, unhappy union—he left his young wife a fortune that amply compensated for the misery she had endured. While she was still in deep mourning, I—— became acquainted with E——, and, in the language of the day, it was all up with her! Which she admired the more—his talent or the dainty mustache on his red lips, who can say? Be it enough to know that she fell deeply in love, while he—ingrate that we must write him!—he failed to reciprocate the passion.

"According to printed romance, the fair widow ought to have betaken herself and her disdained affections to a convent, there to weep out her life in bitter tears. But *la belle* I—— is not of that sort. She is peculiar and independent—unusual feminine attributes. She preferred to entangle the object of her adoration in a chain of roses. Her plans were original and simple. She repaired one day to E——'s studio, demanded a portrait of herself, and requested that the sittings should take place at her own house. E——, the innocent fellow, never suspecting any plot, consented.

"How shall our weak pen portray these sittings! In sober earnest he went to paint her in the fascinating Satanina costume her caprice had chosen. And she? From the battery of her

dark eyes she shot burning darts, and brought all her fascinations to bear on Adonis—in vain!

“When E—— at last became aware that the ardor of his fair sitter’s glances threatened to singe him, he—fled! One day I—— waited in vain for her artist. In his stead came his factotum, an uncanny beldam, with a *billet* in which E——, with a thousand apologies and excuses, declared himself unable to complete the picture. Shrieks, rending of garments, swoons, smelling-salts, wild despair—quite like a real tragedy—and then the conclusion. I—— flung herself into a cab and drove to the artist’s studio! Great scene! Sharp dialogue! Reproaches! Perfume! E—— summons his female Cerberus. The lady is ill—help her to her carriage. Another reproachful glance—not unmixed with rage—then the curtain falls. What will love not do?”

“Well!” ejaculated Blenkner, flinging the newspaper on the table. “That *is* a trifle strong!”

“Strong?” repeated Rahlou, elevating his brows. “In what way? It is quite harmless; besides, it is truth, and why shouldn’t the truth be told?”

“Beg pardon, most respected scribbler!” angrily interposed Pringsberg. “You print so many lies that it would not have hurt you to give the truth a little less conspicuously in this case. Was it necessary to mention names? Any dolt can guess whom you mean by E—— and I——. You may felicitate yourself on a speedy meeting with Waldau—he has seen your indiscreet scribble!”

The tactless reporter became a trifle uneasy. He would have shrugged his shoulders, or elevated his brows, had he been told that Waldau would punish his insolence by cutting his acquaintance; but the assessor’s words contained a hint that the artist might demand the usual satisfaction for an insult, and that our journalist had certainly not counted on when he penned the article. He shuddered when he thought that he might be compelled to face the muzzle of a pistol.

“Did you see Waldau, to-day?” he asked, turning

insinuatingly to Pringsberg, who was enjoying the reporter's secret anxiety.

"Yes. I met him and Menken. Both were evidently greatly excited; and I dare say Menken, as Waldau's second, will soon be hunting you up. If you will take my advice you will spend the remainder of the day in pistol practice."

Rahlou assumed a careless manner.

"Do you imagine, my dear assessor, that I would consent to fight a duel because of a newspaper article?" he demanded airily. "I despise dueling as a sort of moral cowardice. If you care to read it I will send you a dissertation I once wrote on the subject."

"Thanks," laconically responded Pringsberg, "your latest effort has taken from me all desire to peruse any more emanations from your intellectual brain! I only want to say to you that if you wish to retain a right to join our circle here occasionally, you will have to cease considering us so many ink-horns into which you need only dip your quill to secure material for your articles."

Rahlou started to his feet, evidently offended by the assessor's plain speaking.

"I am not compelled to seek your society for entertainment," he retorted cuttingly. "And you may rest assured, assessor, that in future I shall select the places not frequented by yourself."

"A wise determination!" rejoined Pringsberg; then to the waiter he had beckoned to his side: "Here, boy, take this mug of *mélange* to the table Doctor Rahlou may select!"

"That was the plain unvarnished truth you gave him!" observed Hackert, laughing, glancing after the reporter, who took his seat at a distant table and hid his furious countenance behind the *Illustrated News*.

"The only way to prevent such obtrusive fellows from getting one into trouble," responded the assessor.

"It was infamous to make public that bit of scandal," remarked Blenkner. "But its publicity does not detract from its interest. *I* enjoy it all the more, because I happened to be a witness when the order for the portrait was given. Why in the world did not Waldau seize the golden opportunity and marry Frau Von Hilgersdorf? A handsome little woman with lots of money! He won't be likely to get another chance like it. *Sacre bleu*, I wish I had an order to paint a 'Diavoletta' under similar conditions! But, unfortunate wretch that I am, *I* never get beyond a still-life for the counselor's wife."

Pringsberg laughed.

"You are an unlucky dog!" he exclaimed jestingly. "It must be a doleful task always to be painting dead things as 'natural as life.' But, to return to Waldau, *I* don't think it strange that he wasn't captured by that American emancipated-female style of wooing. I suspect he has his eye on a fairer flower." Here he glanced meaningly at the student. "What have you to say on the subject, Herr Hackert?"

"Nothing—nothing at all," replied the student. "I am not intimate enough with Herr Waldau to be familiar with his heart secrets."

"Ah, surprised I'm sure!" drawled the assessor. "Perhaps you aren't a frequent visitor at you cousin's?"

"What do you mean?" asked the student, sharply surveying the speaker. "You don't mean to imply that Waldau has intentions in that direction? That Lucia—" A loud laugh concluded the sentence.

"I believe Waldau is in love with Fräulein Lucia," said Pringsberg. "And fancy that he is not indifferent

to her. But, pray don't mention this to any one, Herr Hackert; remember it is merely a supposition."

"You needn't be afraid, I am not a Doctor Rahlou," responded Hackert, still laughing. "Waldau and Lucia! Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, they suit together, anyhow! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"And why shouldn't they suit each other?" Pringsberg was a trifle offended by the student's continued merriment. "Waldau has his little peculiarities like the rest of us, but he's a gentleman through and through."

"I don't doubt it, not in the least, my dear fellow, and I am in dead earnest when I assert that they were made for each other. Waldau is to be congratulated, for Lucia is a regular beauty, somewhat after the Savoyard-style, it is true, but every one to his taste! At all events she is as rich as the Hilgersdorf, and that counts for something! Here, *garçon*, a champagne-cobbler! Excuse me, assessor, but the affair amuses me so enormously that I must indulge in an extra cup!"

"If only the Hilgersdorf would accept me as a substitute for my elusive colleague!" sighed "Still-Life" Eugene. "I am a deal better-looking than her deceased spouse."

"You might easily be that," laughingly returned the assessor. "I've heard the old general was a veritable monster of ugliness. Personal courage elevated him to his important military position. As a soldier he was splendid, as a private citizen, br-r-r! Dreyfuss told me some awful stories about him; he was a furious gambler, and it is said he had to quit the army against his will."

"He died at San Remo, I believe?" observed Hackert, sipping his cobbler.

Pringsberg nodded.

"Yes. His widow owns one of the handsomest villas there. She bought it herself, and that was one of the many singular things she has done. The Hilgersdorfs were staying in a *pension* when the general died, and because the lodging-house keeper did not want to keep the body in her house longer than one day, the widow bought the villa which happened to be for sale. It was a whim to buy a house merely to keep a dead body in it for twenty-four hours. I believe Frau Von Hilgersdorf has not been to San Remo since her husband died."

"I dare say she'll visit it again on her next bridal tour," observe Blenkner.

Pringsberg shrugged his shoulders.

"Paint a nice little 'still-life,' and present it to her, Blenkner," he suggested. "Perhaps that will touch her heart, and you will be allowed to share the comfortable nest by the blue Mediterranean."

"Thanks for the suggestion, you are very kind to give me such good counsel."

"Who is talking about our unhappy old counselor?" interrupted a voice behind Blenkner's chair. "What are you saying about poor old Dreyfuss?"

Lieutenant Markwitz greeted his acquaintances with a familiar nod, seated himself in the chair vacated by Rahlou, and lighted a cigarette.

"We weren't talking about the counselor," replied Blenkner, "but of a species of 'counsel' that has no connection with his office. But why do you call our old friend unhappy?"

"What! Haven't you heard the news?"

"Not a word. Some new sensation? It is well Rahlou is not within hearing. What has happened?"

Markwitz blew a cloud of smoke from his lips and

dropped a lump of sugar into the cup of coffee the waiter placed before him.

"It is no laughing matter," he said soberly. "His niece, Annie, has run away."

"The sedate little Annie?"

"That *is* news!"

"You are joking, Markwitz—tell us the truth? What has happened?"

"'Pon my word, I'm telling you the truth. Annie Bürger disappeared last night."

"Great Heaven, man, explain yourself! What happened to the poor girl? Was she abducted?"

"Yes, 'abducted,' as you call it, regularly and formally abducted."

"Why, that is horrible! Are we returning to the age of the troubadours? Beg pardon, lieutenant, but I really cannot believe that you know what you are saying. Annie Bürger, one of the most sensible of girls, forget herself so far as to elope with any one?"

"Forget herself?" repeated Markwitz. "That's as you take it, my dear fellow. Society in general will, doubtless, say she has forgotten herself. Perhaps you will judge differently when I tell you that the name of her abductor is Doring."

"What! Doring? Our cold-blooded Doring?"

"The man with the heart of ice?"

"My old comrade of the cadet corps, Doring? Well, well! I always fancied him a sly sort of chap, though, so I am not so much surprised as I might be. I dare say the little Bürger has some money of her own, which she took with her?"

Markwitz cast a glance at the student, which was a sufficient reply for the cynical question, then turned to Pringsberg and said:

"The affair sounds more sensational than it is in

reality, and as Doring is one of my nearest friends, I happen to know all about it. Doring and Miss Bürger have loved each other for a long time ; and when the counselor was asked to consent to their marriage, he refused so brusquely that there was no use to hope he might change his mind. So they decided to marry without his consent, as Annie is of age and her own mistress. Doring asked for a furlough, and at the same time sent in his resignation, which was accepted ; and the romantic tale of abduction turns out to be a very common-place, every-day affair. The banns have been posted for a fortnight in the register's office—without the counselor hearing of it, however—and yesterday afternoon, at six, the civil marriage was performed, Wedell and myself acting as witnesses. At midnight the abduction—that is, the wedding journey, began ; and the happy pair have, by this time, received the blessing of the church on their union in a neighboring city.”

“It is easily seen that we live in an age of steam and electricity, sagely observed the assessor. “All that is needed to give a proper finish to the story is for Dreyfuss to wire a handsome dowry after his runaway niece.”

“Which he is not at all likely to do,” laughingly appended Markwitz. “On the contrary, the old gentleman is so enraged that he is in danger of an apoplectic fit.”

“Then the dowry will not be forthcoming, and Doring has next to nothing,” remarked Blenkner.

“Very little. He will receive the pension for his fifteen years' service, but that is not much. Annie has a little money, I believe—enough to keep the traditional wolf from the door. Herr Hackert, to reply to your question of a few minutes ago, I must tell you also that

there are yet a few persons in our Mammon-worshipping age who marry for love alone."

The student bowed mockingly : "Thanks for the information, my dear lieutenant, I was not aware of the fact !"

"What does Doring intend to do ?" inquired Blenker.

"He expects to get a position in some engineer corps. He is a clever fellow, has a good deal of technical knowledge, is indefatigably industrious and obstinately persevering. Men with such qualifications are always in demand."

"It is a pity, however, that he cannot remain in the army—he is so superb in his uniform ! I should like to paint his portrait—"

"He isn't a 'still-life,'" interposed Pringsberg. "But look, there come Waldau and Menken ! They have stopped at Rahlou's table. Now we shall see some fun !"

All glances turned toward the designated table ; but the assessor was disappointed in his expectations of "fun."

Waldau stopped close beside the journalist, and said in a low tone :

"I want to see you alone. Will you come with me into the next room for a few moments ?"

Rahlou, whose face had grown pale, rose at once.

"With pleasure, Herr Waldau," he returned, with forced composure ; and the two men—to the disappointment of the little gossip-clique at the neighboring table—disappeared beyond the door of a "reserved" cabinet, while Menken, after waving a greeting toward the assessor and his companions, took a seat at another table.

"The article," began Waldau, after a moment's sur-

vey of the man standing before him, "signed 'R' in your newspaper this morning is from your own pen, I believe?"

"I have no reason to deny it, Herr Waldau," responded the journalist, assuming a bold front.

A slight flush reddened the young artist's cheeks; he thrust his hand into the pocket of his coat and stepped back a pace.

"Will you tell me your object in writing the infamous report?" he asked.

"It was written merely to entertain my readers, Herr Waldau."

"At my expense, Herr Rahlou? Or did you imagine that no one would guess who were meant by the E—— and I—— of your interesting romance?"

"I doubt if any one has guessed it, Herr Waldau. Moreover, I can't understand why you, my dear friend——"

"Don't call me your friend!" savagely interrupted Waldau. "I forbid that sort of familiarity from you! Now listen to me: I want you to retract in to-morrow's paper every word of that scandalous story——"

Rahlou interrupted him by a despairing gesture.

"Ask anything but a retraction, Herr Waldau——anything!" he exclaimed pleadingly. "It would cost me my situation——my salary——my whole future! Oh, you would not believe what a tyrant is our employer! A retraction——a contradiction, and we are discharged——ruined! Believe me, my dear Herr Waldau, that article is not so bad as you imagine. Indeed, I believe that were you to bring suit against me for it I should be acquitted."

"I bring suit against *you*? That the filthy scandal might be further nourished! I wonder what you take me for, Herr Rahlou?"

"Oh let the matter drop, Herr Waldau. I admit that I was wrong in using the letters of your own and the lady's name, but, depend on it, my dear Herr Waldau, the whole affair will be forgotten in three days. The grass will have grown over it by the end of the week. I know the public!"

"Then you refuse to retract? Refuse me the only satisfaction I am justified in demanding, for I will not fight a creature like you?"

"I must refuse, believe me. My very existence is at stake. I—"

"Then," interrupted Waldau, drawing his hand, in which he held a glove, from his pocket. "Then I shall allow myself the pleasure of chastising you as one does a school-boy. Take that, you cowardly cur!" striking the journalist full in the face with his glove.

Rahlou grew pale as death but did not stir.

"Why don't you defend yourself, coward?" exclaimed Waldau. "I can't continue to strike a defenseless creature."

Rahlou merely drew himself up, and with affected disdain, replied :

"I don't make a practice of fighting in public places, Herr Waldau. Amusements of that sort I leave for students and artists. But do not imagine that I don't know how to avenge a blow!"

Waldau cast on him a withering glance, turned on his heel and joined Menken in the outer room. Five pairs of eyes at the assessor's table turned toward Rahlou when he appeared, but he pretended not to notice them. He emptied his glass with a careless air, flung his cloak around his shoulders and sauntered out.

As he passed through the doorway, Herbert von Hackert rose, excused himself, and hastened after Rahlou, whom he overtook on the steps.

"Waldau insulted you?" he said in a low voice.

"Insulted me?" in a surprised tone, repeated the journalist. "Far from it! Our conversation was quite an agreeable one. An immature youth like Waldau could not insult *me*," he added, with a lofty air.

"So it would seem!" with a peculiar smile responded Hackert, letting his glance rest on the crimson mark across the reporter's forehead, nose and cheek. "Now what would you say, Rahlou, were I to offer you a chance to get even with this 'immature youth—' to retaliate in a more effective manner than by a blow or a pistol shot?"

Rahlou halted and looked sharply at the student.

"Do you come as friend or foe?" he asked, with a sudden change of manner.

"As friend—still more, as confederate. I need your services, your pen. But first I must have your guarantee not to blab, as you do usually—at least not until I give you permission."

"I can be mute enough, my dear Hackert, when discretion seems the wiser part."

"That is well. Come with me to the '*Rothe Meer*.' We shall not be disturbed over our wine there."

They stepped to the pavement and walked together down the street—two kindred souls.





## CHAPTER XI.

### LUCIA'S PLANS.

Counselor Dreyfuss sat at his desk, writing. A remarkable change had come over the old gentleman in the last weeks. True, his snowy waistcoat still described the same imposing rotundity, the carefully shaven cheeks were still as full and rosy, but the calm, self-composed manner, the hearty good-humor of formerly, had disappeared, and he now gave one the impression of a man who had lost all enjoyment in the pleasures and possessions of life.

The counselor was already well up in the fifties ; but no one had ever noticed in him the passage of so many years until now. Now the sharp lines which buried themselves deeply between the brows, at the corners of the eyes and the mouth were plainly noticeable. Every feature, in fact, bore some trace of the age which had come so suddenly upon this man who, only a few short weeks ago, had justly boasted that he was a "youth in spite of his years."

The counselor had passed through some bitter hours. He was a whimsical old gentleman, with odd fancies and peculiar ideas. Aided only by his own energy and perseverance he had lifted himself from a lowly position to the ambitious height of his present office, by

his own energy and perseverance had won a place in the charmed circles of the "best society." One happiness, however, had been denied him—the possession of children of his own. He had, therefore, showered all the love of his nature on his niece Annie. He was very fond of the shy, deer-eyed little maid, with her gentle voice and manner; and expected, in return for the father's love he gave her, to exercise a father's right. His vanity, which had been nourished by association with the upper circles, had laid a thick stratum of pride around his originally kind heart. His office and the orders in his button-hole had ceased to satisfy his craving for fame. His desire now was to possess a title—a title that would give him the *entrée* to the court circles. There were so many upstarts in Berlin who had attained this much-to-be-desired object, why should not he succeed?

He must succeed, and the nearest way to a title was through his niece's marriage with an aristocrat. He never doubted that Annie, who owed so much to him, would refuse to lend her assistance to the scheme—not even when that shy maiden declared her intention to marry the man she loved, did her worthy uncle imagine for a moment that she might disobey him. Therefore, he set about to look for a suitable son-in-law, and was not long in making a selection.

Baron Von Menken was the man who could best further the ambitious councilor's scheme. The baron's coat-of-arms exhibited a nine-pointed coronet, he was on intimate terms at court, was a distinguished-looking personage—a gentleman in every sense of the word. What more could any one desire?

That Menken was twenty years Annie's senior was of as little concern to Herr Dreyfuss as was the fact that the baron might not be willing to enter the Drey-

fuss family as a son-in-law. Annie would inherit near to a million, and a million—so argued the counselor—was surely enough to satisfy anybody's scruples, even those of a fastidious baron with a nine-pointed crown.

Menken listened to the counselor's proposition—which was made with the cold-blooded directness of an experienced business man—at first with an amused smile, afterward with a very serious expression on his grave face. He thanked Herr Dreyfuss in cordial tones for the intended honor, and concluded with :

“My dear friend, I appear younger than I really am at heart, which has made you fancy that I am a suitable match for your niece. You are mistaken. I am not the sort of husband Annie ought to have. I understand perfectly what has made you so frank with me, my dear Dreyfuss, and that is why I am so candid in return. I know the world better than you do. I have had many glimpses behind the scenes of life's theatre, and my experience has taught me that marriages of convenience are always followed by sorrowful results. I do not claim to be a moralist, nor am I puritanical in my ideas, but I have the profoundest reverence for what we call the voice of the heart where marriage is concerned. Only those persons can be happy together who truly love each other ; all other unions are wretched failures ! Look about you, my dear friend, and you will be forced to admit that I am right. You love your niece, and would be sorry to see her unhappy. Take my advice, therefore, cast from your generous heart all unworthy ambition, and bless the union Annie's heart covets. You will be more content in the end, believe me. And now, not one word of this shall ever be known. Your hand, my dear friend !”

When the counselor returned home after his interview with Baron Von Menken, his was not an enviable

frame of mind. He felt as does an ambitious speculator who has lost largely on a venture.

But Herr Dreyfuss had an obstinate will. He deliberated a while over the baron's words, then exclaimed :

"Incredible !" His favorite ejaculation. Adding aloud : "Philosophic phrases won't carry one through the world ! I learned that long ago. Menken means well, no doubt ; but he is mistaken. Marriages of convenience a failure—humph ! Did I marry Therese because I loved her ? And don't we live harmoniously, in spite of our vastly different tastes and temperaments ? Menken's a fool when he adopts that moralist tone ! I ought not to have asked him to marry Annie. But there's time enough ; the child is still quite young, and I am still far enough from being an old man. There is no need for such haste."

Three weeks afterward Annie disappeared ; and the brilliant air-castle, founded by her uncle on a possible aristocratic marriage, tumbled to pieces.

That was a gloomy day in the Dreyfuss mansion—the day after the young girl's unexpected flight. While Frau Dreyfuss sat, silent and tearful, in a corner of her sofa with Annie's tender, but resolute farewell letter in her hands, the counselor stormed and raged about the house, now cursing the ingratitude of his niece, now unloading his fury on the shoulders of Lieutenant Doring, whom he termed the "prime mover in the villainous crime." That the lieutenant had renounced, for the sake of his love, a brilliant career ; and that he, Counselor Dreyfuss—he alone, with his ridiculous vanity and selfishness—was to blame for the young pair's rash act, never entered his obstinate head. But the hottest rage will cool some time, and Counselor Dreyfuss after awhile became more calm. And now

anxiety for the welfare of his favorite took possession of his heart. He had learned from Lieutenant Markwitz that Doring had resigned, and would receive his pension, but that was all he knew about the young pair. What had become of them? Were they as happy as they expected to be? Were they free from care, so far away from all their friends? Would Doring succeed in getting a situation that would support him and his young wife in comfort? All these questions the counselor asked himself more than once, in secret of course, for to mention aloud the names of the "runaways," was to bring on an attack of hysterical weeping in his wife.

But painful as was the loss of his favorite, the deep anger Herr Dreyfuss felt toward her husband was not softened by his anxiety. Vanity was so dominant in this otherwise excellent man, that all the more generous emotions of his heart were suppressed. He could not forget that in losing his wished-for aristocrat son-in-law, he had lost also the opportunity of securing the talismanic prefix "von," and its attendant brilliant nimbus.

"Augustus!"

Frau Dreyfuss's tremulous tones at his shoulder interrupted the counselor's writing. He turned hastily toward her, and said, almost angrily:

"What do you want? You come into the room like a ghost. I didn't hear you. Do you want anything?"

The rotund little woman, whose moon-shaped face even the copious tears could not rob of its ruddy freshness, surveyed her husband with a wistful glance.

"The postman told me you got a letter with a—a foreign postmark," she returned, hesitatingly, "I thought perhaps it—it might—"

"Be from your dutiful runaway," interrupted Drey-

fuss, gruffly completing the sentence for her. "Of course you have no room in your thoughts for anything, or anybody but that little ingrate! I am a secondary consideration since that girl deserted us so shamefully! Indeed, it seems almost as if it was Annie who had managed this household. Pray, did it ever happen before she ran away that the soup tasted of smoke, and that the chops came to the table half raw?"

"Never!" exclaimed his wife, with an indignant gesture. "Never! And I should never be able to forgive myself if it had happened. But, Augustus—" her eyes filled with tears. "Can I help it if my thoughts are constantly with my darling child? That I worry constantly about her? That my heart is always trembling for fear something dreadful will happen to her? All my closets are filled with the beautiful linen I intended for her, and who can tell if she has so much as a single towel for her pretty hands!"

"That she is not in such straits is proved by her letter," responded the counselor. "She writes from Göschenen, where Döring has an important position on the new railway. Here, read for yourself," tossing the letter toward her.

The worthy dame's broad hands trembled as she unfolded the note-sheet, and tears flowed unchecked over her round cheeks, while she devoured with eager eyes the beloved and familiar writing.

"The dear child!" she murmured as she read. "And to think that she does not suffer in that horrible Alpine region—with its avalanches and its glaciers, and the awful cold! And Döring is an engineer on the new Gothard railway? I am glad Annie is near a railway. Things are not so likely to happen when one is where one can get to one's friends easily! If only I knew that the food she has to eat is well-cooked. I think of

the poor child every time I go into the kitchen. I dare say that is the reason the soup is smoky and the chops are raw. I don't look after the cook as carefully as I used. What a nice letter the dear child writes, and how prettily she begs us to forgive her! Augustus, you are not true to your Dreyfuss heart if you refuse to pardon the child for obeying the pleadings of her love."

"*Papperlapapp!*" irritably ejaculated the counselor, moving uneasily about in his chair. "I know very well what I am doing. Gratitude ought always to come before love—that's what *I* think. I wish them all good luck, but I can't forget the trick they played on me. You see that Annie wants me to continue the management of her little fortune. Of course I shall do as she wishes, because I promised her father I would take care of the money for her. But I want you to understand, Therese—" he became very emphatic here—"that a business intercourse is the only sort we hold with Annie and her abductor."

"'Abductor?'" echoed Frau Therese. "What a word, Augustus! You talk and act as if you had never in all your life been guilty of a foolish trick. The children only married without your consent, and I must confess I can't call that a crime. *I*, for one, should love dearly to visit Annie next summer—"

"Incredible!" roared the counselor, starting to his feet. "Of course you will persist in acting contrary to my wishes! I declare this constant irritation is making me ill. I must go out and take some exercise, or I shall have a nervous fever. Pray give me my *paletot*."

The wife shook her head in silence, and, with reproachful eyes, watched her spouse thrust his arms into his coat and stalk excitedly toward the door.

He was passing into the hall when the front-door

bell rang, and a clear, girlish voice was heard inquiring if the counselor and Frau Dreyfuss were at home.

"Always to you, my dear Miss Von Hackert," called the counselor, his irritation suddenly vanishing. "This is very kind, to let us get a sight of your pretty face again ! And Frau Sporken, too ? That is good ! Pray, come in. How well you are looking, both of you. Miss Lucia, I see, has entirely recovered from her long illness."

This was true. Lucia's lovely face had regained its former color ; her eyes sparkled, and every movement of her slender form showed the old-time elasticity and grace.

"We have come, my dear counselor," she began, "to make a violent attack on you, and want you to promise in advance that you will do what we ask."

"As if I could refuse you anything !" responded the counselor, bowing gallantly. "I am all curiosity. Pray begin the assault at once ?"

Frau Dreyfuss, according to her hospitable custom, had ordered cakes and wine when the callers entered, and her husband proceeded to fill the glasses.

"You remember," continued Lucia, taking the proffered refreshments, "I spoke to you once of our desiring to find a comfortable place for the summer, and you said you and Frau Dreyfuss might join us. Well, we have decided that, as Berlin has nothing alluring to offer during the hot weather, we will hunt pleasanter quarters, and we intend to hold you to your promise to come with us."

"I am not in the least inclined to break it, my dear miss," promptly and heartily returned the counselor. "I am not at all anxious to breathe the dust of Berlin streets. If my wife is willing—"

"Indeed I am willing," interposed Frau Dreyfuss.

"I should be, and were it only for an opportunity to get rid of my present cook. You cannot guess, Frau Von Sporken, what a trial that woman is to me! Only fancy, she can't learn how to garnish properly a *bœuf à la jardinière*!" And the housewife proceeded in a whisper to relate the tribulations of the kitchen. While she was thus engaged Lucia turned again to the master of the house.

"I am so glad you consent to come with us, counselor," she said, with an engaging smile. "Of course, there would be no harm in our travelling by ourselves, although aunt does not fancy the idea; but you know it is so much pleasanter to have a gentleman to look after the little disagreeables of a journey. May I take it upon myself to map out our route?"

"By all means! I shall be only too delighted to follow so charming a guide."

"Thanks! You have no objection to Switzerland, I presume?" toying rather confusedly with her parasol.

"Switzerland?" repeated the counselor, fixing a suddenly suspicious glance on the girl's downcast face. "I see!" he added, after a moment's silence. "I think I understand the object of your assault! Do you know that Annie and Doring are in Göschenen, and you would drag me, by force or artifice, into their neighborhood, so that you might arrange a forgiveness-drama! Believe me, my dear Fräulein Lucia, gladly as I would do anything to please you, this I cannot do!"

Frau Dreyfuss no sooner heard the word Göschenen than she broke from her favorite theme and, with Frau Von Sporken following her lead, joined forces with Lucia. The three women now besieged the counselor with such energy, that he was at last forced to declare that he would accompany them to Switzerland; but a

reconciliation with the runaways—to that he would never consent, never!

With this declaration Lucia seemed inclined to be satisfied. She told the counselor that she, too, had received a “charming” letter from Annie, who was “very, very happy,” and that she, Lucia, had hoped to arrange a “forgiveness-drama;” but, of course, if the dear counselor could not bring himself to consent to a reconciliation, then there was no use to urge him further.

When the two ladies had taken leave, Herr Dreyfuss, with frowning brows, paced the floor, growling occasionally under his breath: “No, I won’t do it!” “Stick to your resolutions, Dreyfuss!” “Don’t go contrary to your convictions!”





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MAN IN BLACK.

"Good morning, my dear baron !"

"Good morning, Signor Cadama !"

The two men shook hands in a cordial manner, for the Italian *avvocato* and the German student had become close friends since the *signor's* first visit to Hackert's apartments.

Signor Giulio Cadama had taken apartments in the same building with the student. But his visiting-card now informed the public that he was a "Teacher of Italian." The former title "*avvocato*," had been dropped for reasons best known to himself.

Cadama drew forward a chair, and Hackert seated himself. The student examined the carved ivory top of his walking-stick for several moments in silence, then said hastily, as if anxious to rid his mind of the petition which burdened it :

"I need some more money, Cadama. I am completely broke."

"How much do you want ?" asked the Italian, with his peculiar smile.

"Two or three thousand marks will be enough this time. I want it for a friend who paid a debt of honor for me not long ago. He asks a similar favor of me now, so I can't refuse."

Signor Cadama took from his breast pocket three bank-notes and laid them on the table.

"You young men squander a deal of money—much more than is prudent," he remarked. "But it is no concern of mine so long as it does not affect my personal bank account."

"You know very well," rather tartly rejoined the student, "that you will get back your loans, together with the usurious interest you demand, so what is the use of preaching?"

"You must remember that there is a bottom to my bag of money, my dear baron. It would not be very pleasant were our funds to give out before we had gained our object."

"Then why in the name of Satan don't you hurry up matters?" angrily exclaimed Hackert. "I can't conceive what you are waiting for. Let's hand the whole thing over to the courts."

Cadama drew down the corners of his mouth and half-closed his eyes.

"Pray do so, my dear baron," he interposed, calmly. "But be sure to hand over, at the same time, sufficient proof to establish your case, else you will be laughed at for your pains. Do you imagine I came here merely for the sake of ruining my stomach with your Berlin beer? Were our case as simple as you seem to believe, it might have been managed just as easily from Rome. If only you would follow my advice, without troubling yourself about my operations, we should probably get on more speedily. Will you be kind enough to sign this note, and you shall have three thousand marks."

Hackert glanced at the paper which the Italian laid before him, then signed it as requested, discreetly repressing the imprecation which rose to his lips when he saw the interest demanded. He was in Cadama's hands.

With the Italian's help he was to become a millionaire ; without it he would remain a beggar.

"There !" And Hackert flung the promissory note toward his new "friend," who calmly pocketed it.

"And now for some business," said Cadama, opening his cigarette case and offering it to the student. "I have some good news for you. You told me not long ago an amusing story about the runaway daughter or niece of a very rich man—"

"Counselor Dreyfuss. Yes," interpolated Hackert.

"*Bene.* And the young officer, for whose sake the young lady deserted the parental roof is a Lieutenant Doring. Not so?"

"Yes, yes, but I don't see what that has got to do with our case."

"Pray let me finish," continued Cadama. "Yesterday I received a letter from Francisco Boccani dated at Airolo, at the southern base of the St. Gothard. Among other items of interest, Francisco informs me that he has secured, through the influence of a friend of mine, a situation in the company which is engaged in excavating the Gothard tunnel. The lad, it seems, has won the confidence of his employers, who intrust him with important dispatches to the German engineers at the northern extremity of the tunnel. On one of his errands to Göschenen he happened to make the acquaintance of a young engineer named Doring, who was formerly in the Prussian army, and one day overheard Doring and his wife talk about a Colonel Von Hackert and his daughter Lucia. Francesco, who is a discreet youth, and knows how to keep his own counsel, writes to ask in what manner he shall deport himself toward these people."

"A singular coincidence, indeed !" observed Hackert. "But I don't see what benefit it will be to us."

Cadama blew the clouds of tobacco smoke in delicate rings about his head.

"It might happen," he returned suggestively, "that a meeting between Francisco and Lucia could be brought about through these Dorings."

"By Jove!" ejaculated the student with sudden animation. "I have an idea. I heard yesterday from Waldau, the artist, concerned in that famous scandal with Frau Hilgersdorf, that Lucia and her dame of honor are going with Counselor Dreyfuss and his wife to Switzerland. The counselor's niece will, I have no doubt, seek a reconciliation with her millionaire uncle, and as Lucia is with him it is only necessary to instruct Francisco to ingratiate himself in such a manner in Doring's good graces that the engineer will give him employment at the northern end of the tunnel. According to your description of him, Francisco is a cunning lad; he will therefore understand how to win Doring's favor."

The Italian had listened attentively to the student's speech—rather a long and sensible one for him.

"That is not a bad suggestion," observed Cadama, approvingly. "Almost worth the three thousand marks I have just advanced to you! Are you certain that the counselor's party are going to Switzerland?"

"I heard it at second hand, as I told you; but Waldau is on such intimate terms with my reputed cousin that I have no doubt it is true. Since that affair with the enamored widow our artist has become so tremendously moral that he would not be likely to indulge in even a small fib."

"*Va bene*, that is well!" Signor Cadama lighted a fresh cigarette and crossed one knee over the other. "I shall write at once to Francisco. If all my plans work as successfully, as I now have reason to believe

they will, we shall be able ere long to strike the final blow."

"It ought to have been given long ago," growled the student.

"According to your idea, *carissimo*," rejoined the Italian. "You are wrong, however; but let that go: *Chi va piano va sano*, and you, too, must have patience. By the way, have you seen Rahlou lately?"

"Several times."

"I hope you were not so imprudent as to confide in him *all* the details of the affair?"

"I told him only what was necessary. He, too, is eagerly awaiting the moment to send off his dart!"

"He will not have to wait long. I dare say your generous heart prompted you to offer him a liberal share of the future ingots for his valuable services?"

Hackert rested an angry glance on the Italian's ironical countenance:

"You must think me an idiot, most worthy *signor*!" he returned. "No work, no pay—as you say. Rahlou, of course, expects to be paid for his services; but money is a secondary consideration in this case. Revenge is his chief motive. I told you the reason, I believe?"

Cadama nodded:

"Yes; and how—if one may inquire—are the tender relations between Lucia and Herr Waldau advancing? You know everything. I presume you are also familiar with such dainty heart secrets!"

"Why in thunder should I concern myself about Waldau's love affairs?" exclaimed the student, impatiently thumping the floor with his stick. "I don't care a rap whether he marries Lucia or not? He only interests me in that he is hated by Rahlou, which is to our advantage. I don't think you appreciate, *Signor*

*Avvocato*, the power which the press exercises in our country ; nor do you understand the advantage it is to have the favor of this or that pen."

"You are mistaken, baron," responded Cadama, passing his hand across his convulsively twitching lips. "I do fully understand and appreciate all these advantages. The newspapers could very materially aid our cause by judicious reference to it. But it would have to be done with extreme caution, else the enemy might take alarm and manage to escape us."

"Good heavens," ejaculated the student in sudden alarm, "that would be a calamity !"

"Yes, indeed," continued Cadama, "I mean just what I say. What would become of our project were Lucia to take it into her head to fly to a foreign country? We should then have to conduct our case through the mediation of consulates, and I know by experience how that sort of business is performed !"

"That would be outrageous, I swear ! I see now how necessary it is to be cautious. We will have to keep a strict watch on the girl's movements—"

"I have already made all the arrangements necessary for that, my dear baron," quietly interrupted the Italian. "I merely mentioned the subject to show you how easily our plans could be frustrated. And now, to change the subject, at what hour does Frau Von Hilgersdorf's *soirée* begin ?"

"Nine o'clock, I believe. It is not a *soirée*, however ; only a tea or something of that sort, which she is giving before she leaves town for the summer."

"Ah, yes ; I remember she told me she wanted to take a look at the North Sea before journeying in the autumn to Italy. I trust we may meet Fräulein Lucia and her *dame d'honneur* this evening. I hope to be presented to the former as the fair widow's Italian teacher."

“Fran Von Hilgersdorf told me, when I called on her yesterday, that my ‘cousin’ had sent an acceptance, so your wish is likely to be gratified. The devil only knows what the Hilgersdorf has against Lucia! The tone in which she spoke of the girl was anything but pleasant. I wonder if she heard of Waldau’s infatuation for Lucia, and if she is jealous!”

Cadama laughed.

“Depend on it, she has! Have you heard the Tuscan maxim: ‘*La donna e come la castagna, bella di fuori, e dentro ha la magagna.*’” [Woman is like a chestnut—beautiful to look at, but with a worm in its heart.] “The worm is jealousy, which comes with love. Who can say the jealousy in Frau Von Hilgersdorf’s heart may be of use to us. Will you call for me this evening?”

“I think not,” replied the student, rising and drawing on his gloves. “It is not well for us to be seen together too frequently. People might suspect that we have interests in common.”

“You are right. I am compelled to admire your sagacity to-day. If Lucia already knows the secret of her birth—and I am inclined to think she does—she will be easily startled. We shall, therefore, not meet again until this evening, in the Hilgersdorf drawing-rooms.”

A cordial hand-clasp at parting as at meeting, and the two odd companions separated.

\* \* \* \* \*

Frau Von Hilgersdorf had invited only her more intimate acquaintances to her house this evening. She had a special reason for wishing to see assembled in her drawing-room once more before her departure from the city, the old circle of friends. Her pride and courage prompted her to treat with silent scorn the scandalous

report spread abroad by Doctor Rahlou's scurrile pen. But she could not help fearing occasionally that her reputation might have been affected by it.

A Hungarian by birth, the fair widow was like the wine which ripens on the sunny slopes of her native land. And like the fire which slumbers in that famous beverage, a fervid passion smoldered in every fiber, and throbbed in every pulse-beat of this fair daughter of Hungary. She loved Elimar Waldau, and hers was one of those impulsive hearts that cannot wait for love's advances. She knew that every word, every glance betrayed her passion—but what cared she? She was committing no crime in seeking to win the man she adored. She was merely acting contrary to the conventional code of society.

But Elimar Waldau's heart was already gone from his keeping, and the ardor which beamed on him from the young widow's lovely eyes only repelled him, her unfeminine advances filled him with disgust.

Lucia Von Hackert and Frau Von Sporken were among Frau Von Hilgersdorf's guests this evening. Lucia had read Herr Rahlou's article. Her cheeks had grown slightly paler, but she had made no comment when Frau Von Sporken indignantly pronounced the story a "vile fabrication." The charitable old lady, however, knew that her young charge resented the injury done to one of her sex, when, on receiving Frau Von Hilgersdorf's invitation, she sent an acceptance instead of the regret she would have otherwise sent, giving her mourning as an excuse. The maligned widow should see that the journalistic venom had failed in its purpose!

The last guest to make his appearance in Frau Von Hilgersdorf's drawing-room was a gentleman, a stranger to the company. He was tall, slender and black-

whiskered ; he wore a black coat and waistcoat buttoned up to the throat, and carried a *chapeau-claque* in his black-gloved hand. The edges of his linen cuffs and collar were the only touches of white about the singular-looking man's dress. He looked like a messenger from death.

He was introduced by the hostess as "Signor Cadama," and later, she explained to several ladies that he was her Italian teacher.

"You know, I expect to spend the autumn at San Remo," she added, "and my Italian needs burnishing. Herr Von Hackert recommended the *signor* to me, and I find him very clever and interesting."

While Counselor Dreyfuss chatted with Assessor Pringsberg and Lieutenant Markwitz in one corner, in another his wife, who had beckoned Lucia Von Hackert to her sofa, talked in a confidential manner to the young girl. Singularly enough the worthy dame was not discussing any new recipes for the kitchen, or giving directions how to remove wine-stains from table-linen. For weeks the subject of her conversation had been Annie Doring and her husband and, lately, Göschenen and the St. Gothard. For the first time in her life she perused the newspapers, confining her reading, however, to the items concerning the progress of the Gothard Tunnel. From that hour the counselor's peace was broken, for, notwithstanding his strict orders that Annie's name was to be mentioned only in a "business connection," his wife found a hundred opportunities to recall the "disinherited one" to his mind.

When Frau Therese took her seat at table she would sigh over exorbitant prices of the necessities of life in Switzerland, of which she had read in the newspapers. When she prepared for her night's rest she bemoaned

the hard mattresses of the Italian boundary. When she lighted a match, she would be reminded of the extreme danger of the dynamite used for blasting. In short, the poor old lady was constantly sighing and fearing evil for the young pair at the foot of the St. Gothard, and every sigh was but another reproach for her husband's obduracy and egoism.

Lucia was glad to engage in conversation with Frau Dreyfuss, whose harmless prattle lightened the dull feeling which oppressed her heart. There is a legend still believed by the superstitious folk of Wallachia, that the vampire, clothed in somber black, and with a countenance of deathly pallor, will approach his victim 'mid the merry dance and drink his heart's blood.

Lucia was suddenly and disagreeably reminded of this legend when she saw two piercing black eyes resting on her. A sharp pain seized her heart. Who was this somber-garbed, pale-faced stranger beneath whose gaze her heart quaked with fear? She had no faith in the Wallachian legend, but she remembered another one, equally dismal, that of the *mal occhio*, and this stranger was a native on the land which believes in and fears the power of the evil eye. She felt almost as if the glance which rested so persistently on her was scorching and withering her heart. At last, unable longer to control her nervousness, the young girl rose, and begging Frau Therese to excuse her, moved forward to join a group of ladies who were gathered about Frau Hilgersdorf in a window recess.

In doing so she was obliged to pass close by the man in black. Signor Cadama was standing beside an ebony table, the top of which was richly inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a piece of furniture which had been presented by a foreign princess to the deceased general.

The Italian, who was absorbed in examining a water-

color that hung directly above the table, when Lucia passed, turned abruptly and addressed her :

"Here is a remarkable coincidence, *signorina*," he said in his foreign accent. "One would almost believe the female figure in this little *bivouac* sketch to be a portrait of yourself. Impossible, however, for I see in the corner '*Fecit* 1859,' and at that time you had not yet opened your eyes on the scenes of this world. Look at it, *signorina*. Can't you see the strong likeness to your own face?"

Lucia came reluctantly nearer and looked at the picture. It represented a group of officers gathered about a camp-fire. On the right, a young woman in the becoming dress of a *vivandière* stood behind an improvised sideboard, in front of which were two men, one in the uniform of Austria, the other in civilian's dress. The latter held in his hand a glass of wine, which he extended toward a second civilian, who was seated in front of an easel near a tent in the background.

Cadama was right, it was a singular coincidence. The delicately beautiful face on the canvas—the nose, the rounded chin, the dark eyes and hair; every feature, even the pose of the head, was the same as that of the young girl who stood surveying it.

Lucia was astonished :

"An interesting coincidence, truly," she observed, less in reply to Signor Cadama than to Frau Hilgersdorf, who, at that moment, came toward them. "May I ask what the picture is intended to represent, Frau Hilgersdorf?"

"Merely an episode from a bivouac during the campaign in Lombardy, I believe," returned Frau Hilgersdorf. "I found the sketch lately among all sorts of lumber, which had been cast aside after my husband's

death. I admire the picture—it is artistic in execution and a pretty bit of coloring. The civilian on the right, beckoning to the artist, is my husband. I remember hearing him speak of a gifted painter from Vienna who made several sketches during that campaign; and I fancy the artist immortalized himself by painting his own likeness in this picture. You will find the names of the principal figures on the back of the canvas.”

“I have always taken a keen interest in pictures,” observed the *signor*, carefully removing the sketch from its hook; “and find that real talent shows itself better in a hastily executed water-color than in the more carefully finished oil-painting. How exquisitely the figures of these two civilians are treated, and what a graceful creature is this *vivandière*!” He turned the picture and looked at the back. “Ah, here are the names: ‘Baron Von Eynatheu, lieutenant; Captain Haberberg; Lieutenant Von Hilgersdorf; Paul Wyrenberg, artist; Colonel Von Kissling; La Bella Carmella, *vivandière*!’” The Italian glanced from beneath his half-closed eyelids toward Lucia, and added, in a peculiar tone: “So, ‘Carmella’ is the name of the graceful Hebe. Very likely she is—or was, perhaps I should say—a daughter of Liguria, or of Lombardy, which was captured from the gallant Tedeschi.”

Lucia, who was talking with a lady by her side, did not hear the Italian’s concluding words, nor see the glance he rested on her. But Herbert von Hackert both heard and saw, and when Cadama turned, from restoring the picture to its place on the wall, let his eyes rest questioningly on the Italian’s inscrutable countenance.

Later in the evening Signor Cadama seated himself by one of the small tables littered with calendars, pho-

tographs and gilt-edged volumes. He sat so that he could see through the open door of the adjoining room, where Lucia von Hackert was standing beside Frau Dreyfuss. The young girl had raised herself on the tips of her toes, and stood thus with one arm uplifted toward the snowy calla-lily which crowned the apex of a pyramid of flowers. The full light of the chandelier fell on the girl's youthful figure, whose exquisite grace and beauty were enhanced by the airy pose.

The Italian was not the only one attracted by the girl's rare loveliness. A second pair of eyes rested on her.

Cadama saw the woman who stood in the open doorway half-hidden by the heavy *portière*. It was Frau Von Hilgersdorf, who, imagining herself unseen, watched the young girl with an expression of hatred so intense that the Italian was startled. Involuntarily he rose to his feet ; but his movement caused the widow to retreat hastily. That he had seen enough, however, to satisfy him was proved by the smile on his thin lips, and the manner in which he rubbed together the palms of his thin hands.

An hour later the company broke up.

"What do you think of the 'man in black,' *Tantchen*?" asked Lucia when they were seated in their carriage.

Frau Von Sporken gave a little shudder.

"I never met any one who roused in me such antipathetic feelings," was the reply. "It is that sort of sensation one experiences when in the presence of hideous reptiles."

Lucia leaned silently back against the cushions. She was thinking again of the legends of the vampire and the evil eye.

Meanwhile, Signor Cadama and Herbert von Hackert walked arm in arm toward their apartments.

The Italian pressed significantly the hand lying on his arm and whispered :

“ More good luck, my dear baron. I have discovered another ally, and one of inestimable value—Frau Von Hilgersdorf.”

“ What do you mean ?” asked Hackert. “ Do you imagine that the deceased general was connected in any way with Carmella Boccani ?”

“ I will forfeit my head if General Hilgersdorf was not the only one beside your uncle who knew the secret of Lucia’s birth. You remember the so-called burglary at the Hackert mansion the night your uncle died ? You remember, also, that nothing was stolen ? I thought at the time that valuable papers might have been taken, and intimated as much in an anonymous letter I sent to the police authorities. I think now that I was mistaken ; for I became convinced this evening that the private document, which I believed had been purloined from your uncle’s safe, was in Hilgersdorf’s possession, and is now among his papers—of which fact his widow is ignorant. Could we get hold of that document, my friend, we might at once play our cards openly. The general’s widow must be taken into our confidence ; and that she will willingly become an accomplice I feel certain, for she hates, with all the fury of her passionate nature, the girl who has won the heart of the man she loves, Lucia !”

The student had listened with breathless interest to Cadama’s words. He now asked :

“ You must pardon me for questioning you, *Signor Avvocato*, but I should like to know if you connect Lucia with General Von Hilgersdorf because you fancied you saw a likeness to my reputed cousin in that *vivandière*—”

“ The sketch gave me an idea—nothing more !” inter-

posed the shrewd advocate. "Carmella Boccani was a *vivandière* in Garibaldi's army during the campaign in Lombardy in '59. Lieutenant Von Hackert and Lieutenant Von Hilgersdorf were on *most* intimate terms with the fair Carmella. Do you gather any meaning from that statement?"

"I think I do," replied the student.

"All that is necessary," resumed Cadama, "to complete our evidence is that document; and when we find it—as find it we *must*—then have a care, have a care, my pretty beggar princess!"





## CHAPTER XIII.

### IDYLS.

The sun was sinking to rest beyond the towering mountains. The snow-crowned summits glowed beneath his farewell kisses, but twilight shadows were already gathering in the deep ravines. In the open valleys, however, it was still almost as light as day; for the moon was rising—pale and shyly enveloped in a fleecy cloud-mantle, as if she were trying to hide herself from the sun's last ardent glances. She waited until the crimson faded from the snowy heights, then she flung off her mantle and revealed herself in all her silvery beauty. Like a weary giant, resting amid the dewy blossoms, so old St. Gothard's mighty contour rose against the evening sky. And a weary giant he was in sooth! For months a band of busy men had been laboring, digging and grubbing in his rocky bowels, shaking him with terrific explosions in their efforts to subdue his mighty bulk, so that he might be made a medium of communication between the north and the south countries.

An open wagon was descending one of the narrow roads which led from the mountain into the valley. Three persons occupied the vehicle. Two sat on the

driver's seat, the third occupied the swing-seat which was fastened to the sides of the wagon with leather straps. One of the men seated in front, he who held the reins, wore the costume of the region, a flowered waistcoat of red cloth, coarse linen knee-breeches, heavy woolen stockings and hob-nailed shoes. His seat-mate was certainly no countryman of his; he came from the south side of the Gothard, where the sun shines more warmly. His blue cloth cap rested lightly on a luxuriant mass of raven curls. Two large black eyes looked with changeful expression, now merrily, now gloomily, now with half-awakened longing—on the world about him. An artist would have been attracted by the lad's face. His clothes, although of the plainest material, had about them that touch of jauntiness peculiar to even the lowly-born children of the south. His light neckerchief was carelessly knotted about his throat, the ends left to flutter gayly in the breeze.

The passenger on the swing-seat was evidently a member of the upper classes, that, one could see at a glance, even though his face was browned by exposure to wind and sun, and the full blonde beard on cheeks and chin told plainly that they had not for weeks known the refining influence of a barber's shears.

He who, in those days, traveled in the St. Gothard region could tell at a first glance the profession of the man he chanced to meet. The closely-fitting jacket, the high boots into which the trousers were thrust, the rimless cap, the iron rod and small hammers protruding from a side pocket—this was the practical equipment of the engineers to whose indefatigable energy we owe the entire subjugation of the mighty mountain giant over yonder.

The engineer had made himself as comfortable as possible, in the rather primitive vehicle. He leaned

against the leather strap which formed a sort of back to the swing-seat, and let his glance wander over the changing pictures to the right and left. On either side stretched dark-green pine forests, broken here and there by steep defiles and gigantic cliffs. Here, a slender veil of water leapt over a rocky wall, and moistened with its delicate spray the luxuriant mosses and ferns growing in the crevices. There, a mountain brook, swollen by the snow which was melting in the spring sunshine, found its way over mossy stones, down into the valley where it turned a mill-wheel, and washed the roots of the daisies and golden buttercups luxuriating on its banks. On the right, above the road, might be seen the substantial masonry of the old post-road, which curved its way along the mountain-side. Far below, in the valley, the iron path of the new railway came into sight at intervals; while between the trees, here and there, were occasional glimpses of the viaduct which spanned the rocky defiles, or a red-tiled watch-tower, clinging like a swallow's nest to the granite wall.

The wagon road wound with abrupt turns into the valley, to Rosenholz—a picturesque hamlet amid ancient trees, with a mountain brook babbling through its single street.

The wagon, with its three occupants, rolled down this street, in which a couple of children were playing and several dogs were barking furiously, toward a dwelling near the church. It was built on the so-called Swiss style, with over-hanging eaves, with large stones lying on the shingle-roof; and was the home of the village pastor, Gottfried Stolze, who had lived here for over a quarter of a century.

Another inmate had been added, in the last weeks, to the pastor's household. The wife of one of the engi-

neers on the Gothard Tunnel, who had come down here to escape the keen winds of the more elevated Göschenen, and who had found a pleasant home with the worthy pastor and his wife. The reader will, doubtless, guess at once that the pastor's guest is Frau Annie Doring, the niece of Counselor Dreyfuss.

On the open veranda of the parsonage, which was almost covered with ivy and convolvulus vines, stood Annie, watching with eager expectancy the road leading to the mountain. No sooner did she catch sight of the little vehicle, and the handkerchief waving from the back seat, than she ran swiftly down the steps, through the neatly kept garden, and fell breathlessly into the arms of the man who swung himself from the wagon while it was yet in motion.

"Another kiss, you little recluse—another, and yet another!" he exclaimed gayly, pressing his lips again and again to her rosy mouth. "I hope you won't be afraid of this monstrous red beard. I vowed I would not touch the masculine ornament with shears or razor until yon obstinate giant was pierced through from north to south. We have not yet accomplished our work, and I am here for a few days merely to show my darling that I still live, and that the Alpine gnomes have not dragged me into their subterranean kingdom. Did you receive my daily budgets? I wrote so frequently because I wanted you to know that I thought of you every hour."

Annie smiled lovingly up into her tall husband's face, and pressed his arm more closely against her side as she walked with him toward the house.

"There!" he exclaimed suddenly, halting and looking back. "In my joy at seeing you again, my darling, I forgot all about the lad Francisco, whom I have brought with me. See, there he stands, staring sorrowfully at

the clouds because you did not speak to him, poor lad ! He has learned enough German to enable him to talk with you."

Annie retraced her steps, and extending her hand to the young Italian, said, kindly :

"I am very glad to see you, Francisco—doubly glad, indeed ; for if it had not been for you I might have lost my husband."

The lad bent with courtly deference over her hand, kissed it, and blushing stammered some unintelligible words.

His strong young arm had, a few weeks before, been the means of saving Lieutenant Doring from a horrible death. The lieutenant was examining a successful blast, unaware that a mass of rock just overhead had been loosened and threatened to fall. Francisco, who was standing near, saw the mass move, and snatched the engineer from the dangerous spot just in time to escape the falling rock, which would have crushed him to death. From that hour Doring, who had already taken a fancy to the lad, became very fond of him, and treated him more like a friend than an inferior.

The young couple were met at the door of the cottage by the pastor and his wife. The former was an undersized old man with white curls and a wrinkled face, in which were written his kindness of heart and his love for his fellow-men. Frau Stolze, in white linen cap and neat gown, was a feminine copy of her husband.

Lieutenant Doring shook hands cordially with the worthy pair, and thanked them for their hospitable care of his wife. Then, after he had rid himself of the dust of travel, they sat down to supper.

Meanwhile Francisco, assisted by the driver of the wagon, carried a heavy chest into the ivy-covered arbor

in the garden, to which, after supper was over, the inmates of the parsonage repaired.

"Don't be alarmed, my love," said Doring, smilingly pointing to the chest. "It contains neither dynamite nor blasting powder. Look at the postmark: 'Berlin, S. W.' Now what do you suppose is in the box? You are not the only one who remembered my birthday last week. Read this." He took a letter from his pocket and handed it to the wondering Annie, who unfolded it.

"Poetry?" she exclaimed, then she read aloud:

"*‘ Wohl bist Du geworden ein And’rer,  
Du alter Kamerad!  
Du griffest zum Stabe, ein Wand’rer,  
Hast treulos uns verlassen,  
Die bombenfesten Khawassen,  
Flohst in die Alpenwelt!*

"*‘ Wohl müssten wir eigentlich grollen  
Dir, alter Kamerad—  
Doch heute beim Becher, beim vollen,  
Wie sollten wir da Dich noch hassen,  
Wir bombenfesten Khawassen  
Auf fernem markischen Sand.*

"*‘ Wohl haben wir schlau es erfahren,  
Du alter Kamerad,  
Dass itzo vor dreissig Jahren  
Der Herrgott hat gelassen  
Dich, bombenfesten Khawassen,  
Zum Lebensthor hinein!*

"*‘ Wohl kam uns just der Gedanke,  
Du alter Kamerad:  
Hei! soll er doch frisch ’mal und franke  
Auf Gotthard’s Felsenmasse  
Als bombenfester Khawasse  
Sprengen der Flaschen Spund!*

“ ‘ *Wohl wird er uns d’rum nicht zürnen,  
Der alte Kamerad—  
Wenn wir auf die schneeigen Firnen,  
Dem bombenfesten Khawassen  
Senden heut’ sprudelnden nassen,  
Weingeist’gen Dynamit !* ’ ”

Annie turned to the signature : “ His Imperial Majesty’s Bombproof Cavalry Corps, to our one-time comrade, in all good fellowship ! ”

“ What do you think of it ? ” asked Doring, laughing. “ I fancy Markwitz had a hand in getting it up, for he is the only one of my comrades who knows my birthday. But, whoever it was, I am obliged to him for this proof of my old comrades’ affection.”

He lifted the lid of the chest and revealed, packed in straw, a dazzling array of gold- and silver-topped bottles : Rhein and Bordeaux wines and the fettered foam-spirits of champagne.

Doring turned to the pastor and his wife and said :

“ I have a favor to ask of you, reverend sir. My birthday was last week, and as I was unable to celebrate it up on the mountain, I trust you will not refuse if I invite you to share with me some of this generous remembrance from my old comrades. My young friend Francisco managed to get some strawberries from an acquaintance on the other side of the mountains ; and, as I understand all sorts of ‘ mixtures,’ I think we may be able to celebrate my natal day with a decoction worthy such an occasion ! My first toast, however, shall not be for my own well-being ; but for the success of the stupendous work in which three nations are peacefully engaged : the Gothard Tunnel ! ”

It was not long before the “ mixture ” stood on the wooden table in the arbor ; and the old pastor, who

knew something about the "bouquet" of grape-juice, was complacently sipping a trial glass.

"My respects to you, Mr. Engineer," he said in his harsh, Swiss dialect. "One need not be told that you can deal as masterly with chemicals as with nitro-glycerine and blasting powder. This union of ingredients is perfect!"

Doring acknowledged the compliment with a smile and a bow, then filled all the glasses. The little company took seats around the table; the lieutenant and his wife at the head; then the pastor and his wife facing each other; and Francisco, who had been invited to join the feast by Doring, at the foot.

It was a charming spring evening. The air was deliciously warm; the sky a deep blue, and glittering with stars. Perfect quiet reigned in the village street; only now and then the notes of an Alpine melody came from the lips of a distant milkmaid.

The chief subject of conversation was naturally the tunnel. At the conclusion of Doring's description of the work, the pastor lifted his glass and said:

"The first toast was for the success of your work, engineer; the second one I drink to you, who have aided in the great undertaking. Here's to you, Herr Doring, to your continued happiness and prosperity!"

The glasses clinked musically together, and at the same moment a sonorous voice at the door exclaimed:

"Success to Lieutenant Doring and to his amiable wife. Had it not been for her he would not have given his aid in piercing the stony heart of old St. Gothard!"

Every eye turned in surprise toward the door:

"Waldau, my dear fellow! Do I see aright?" exclaimed Doring, springing toward the new-comer, fol-

lowed by Annie, whose face expressed her delight at seeing an old Berlin acquaintance.

Herr Waldau heartily shook the lieutenant's hand and kissed the one Annie extended to him.

"I know how surprised you must be to have me drop in on you so unexpectedly," he said. "It was very warm in Berlin, so I concluded to flee to the mountains; and, remembering that I had a good friend somewhere in the neighborhood of the Gothard Tunnel, I packed my travelling-bag and sketching paraphernalia—and here I am! That civilization has penetrated even to this remote spot is proved by that classic urn"—pointing smilingly at the punch-bowl on the table—"and those little gold and silver heads peeping from yonder chest bear a close resemblance to the sirens of Rheims and Epernay!"

Doring laughingly responded:

"You will confer a favor on us, my dear Waldau, by testing more closely the resemblance between these golden heads to the sirens you are familiar with. Come, take a seat and tell us how you found us, and how are all our friends at home? First, let me introduce you to our worthy host: Pastor Stolze, Frau Stolze—my friend, Herr Waldau, artist. And this, my dear Elimar," added the lieutenant, turning toward the young Italian, and laying his hand on his shoulder, "is a little friend of mine to whom I owe my life—a brave lad in the employ of the tunnel company—Francisco Pedretti."

Waldau shook hands with the pastor and Frau Stolze, then turned to greet Francisco. He started when his eyes fell on the dusky boy face. Where had he seen those delicate features, those sparkling eyes?

"I knew you would be surprised," observed Doring,

who had noticed the artist's perplexed expression. "The likeness is remarkable, isn't it? If Francisco were to don feminine garments, not even her intimate acquaintances could tell him from Lucia von Hackert. It was this resemblance that first attracted me to him. But, sit down—sit down, my dear fellow, and fill your glass!"

In turning to obey the hospitable command of his friend, Waldau missed seeing the slight change which passed over Francisco's face at mention of Lucia von Hackert's name. He became pale, then the dusky cheeks flushed so deeply that he bent his head low over his glass to hide his face. But there were no eyes for him. The visitor had awakened a hundred recollections of home. Annie was eager to hear all that Waldau had to tell. Twenty questions in a breath. How was dear Aunt Therese? Was uncle still so very, very angry? Were the vases in the drawing-room still filled with the same flowers? Did the canary still hang in the bow-window? Was Frau Von Hilgersdorf going to spend the summer in Berlin? How was Lucia von Hackert? Baron Von Menken? Assessor Pringsberg? "Still-Life" Eugene? And all the rest?

Here the pastor, who had been waiting his chance, adroitly managed to get in a question concerning Bismarck's health; then the lieutenant wanted to know how Waldau found out where they lived, and where he, Elimar, had left his luggage.

"My luggage?" repeated Waldau. "If a portmanteau, a paint-box and a portable easel can be called so, it is down at the inn where I expect to sleep to-night. I inquired for you up at Göschenen, and was told you had come down here to see your wife. I dare say the counselor will follow."

"Oh, you wicked fellow!" interrupted Annie, spring-

ing to her feet, and with simulated anger threatening the speaker with her uplifted hand. "You have spoiled all my plans. Lucia and I had arranged a plot to lure uncle to this place, and we didn't want him or Hans to know anything about our plan for a reconciliation. It is too bad of you!"

Waldau was truly sorry, and begged to be forgiven, while Doring laughed heartily and said :

"There, Waldau, you see that the best of women cannot be trusted! We are married only a few weeks, and here she is plotting in secret against me." He became more serious as he continued: "I confess, my dear Annie, that I should prefer to have your uncle come to see us of his own accord. That I am willing to be on friendly terms with him he knows very well. But your plan, although it was made with the best intention, will lead him to think that I am forced to seek a reconciliation to— I hardly know how to express myself, so I will merely say that I am glad your plan miscarried."

The pastor and his wife had discreetly retired from the arbor when Doring began to speak, and were now promenading in the garden.

Doring was sorry he had spoken so harshly when he saw the grieved expression on his little wife's face. He rose hastily and pressed a kiss on her brow.

"That is right," commended Waldau. "You should never be angry at a well-intended act. Besides, you are at liberty to avoid a meeting with Dreyfuss—which I should not advise, however. Perhaps you are not aware that Fräulein Von Hackert and Frau Von Sporken are traveling with the counselor?" he added carelessly, though a faint flush tinged his cheeks as he mentioned Lucia's name.

"Ah, Lucia here?" ejaculated Doring in a significant

tone. He began to understand what had brought Waldau to the Alps in search of fresh air.

"Lucia here?" softly repeated another voice—so softly that it was merely a breath.

"What is the matter, Francisco? Are you ill?" asked Doring, as the lad leaned back, pale and trembling in his chair.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE NEW CONFEDERATES.

Frau Von Hilgersdorf had not yet departed on her journey, although her trunks had been packed for several days. The cause of this delay was a peculiar one. The day after her "farewell tea," the widow had received the following mysterious letter :

"GRACIOUS LADY: You will greatly oblige one with whom you are acquainted, but who must remain for a time unknown to you, if you will give him a few minutes of your time and attention. I should not venture to intrude on the secrets of your heart, were I not forced by stern duty to do so. Need I tell you that my sympathy for you, when I read that scandalous newspaper article, was as deep as is my contempt for its author? By chance I learned that Herr Rahlou, whom every one believes to be the author of the scandal, and who, doubtless, is a conscienceless reporter, was not the originator. The vile thought was born in the brain of a young girl, one who calls herself in public your friend, but who is in secret your bitterest enemy—because she is jealous of you. This girl, who is in love with the E—— of that infamous romance, and whose modest reserve is but a mask to hide her evil heart, is—do not start, gracious lady—a dangerous adventuress! There is, in all circles of society, more or less wrong-doing, and it is doubly hard to right a wrong, when an exposure would compromise an entire class. In this case, however, we must not, dare not, stop to consider the consequences. As attorney for a party who has been cheated by that girl out of a considerable fortune, I am forced to exert all my energies to accomplish my duty.

Through a remarkable concatenation of circumstances—which one might term a lucky chance were it not a ruling of Nemesis—you are, gracious lady, placed in a position to aid me in unmasking this female swindler. Will you help me? Do you wish to avenge the terrible insult which has been heaped on you? I wait your reply to the pseudonym I have adopted to write to you.

“BRUTUS CASSIUS.”

The writer of this epistle had not miscalculated its effect on the fair widow. He was evidently familiar with the feminine heart, and knew the capabilities of a passionate and jealous nature.

At any other time Frau Von Hilgersdorf would have tossed such an epistle into the waste-paper basket. But not now! A great change had taken place in the young widow when she found that Elimar Waldau would never return her insane passion. Her own heart told her that he must love some one else, and that that some one was Lucia von Hackert she felt confident. Oh, how she hated her more fortunate rival! The letter from “Brutus Cassius” came upon her like a thunderbolt; she read and reread it, and each time became more convinced that it was not intended as a vulgar jest, that there was a vein of truth in the lines. Possibly the writer’s assertions were a trifle exaggerated; but if only a portion of what he wrote were true, then was her hated rival destroyed forever!

A single spark of evil is easily fanned into a flame. Frau Von Hilgersdorf remembered that Lucia’s manner toward her of late was rather reserved. Her feverish brain fancied a hundred little doubts and suspicions. Did not the letter accuse Lucia of being an adventuress—a swindler? At first Frau Von Hilgersdorf could not bring herself to believe this assertion, it was too improbable—nay, impossible! And yet, had not Colonel Von Hackert died under rather suspicious circumstances? Was not that burglary, the night the colonel died, another singular affair? Ah, the sly little Lucia!

What a clever schemer dwelt in that modest little form !

For two days Frau Von Hilgersdorf hesitated to answer the anonymous letter. On the third she rang for her maid, to whom she said :

"We are are not going away just yet, Lisca. The trunks can remain as they are. Bring me my mantle." And the fair widow herself carried a carefully sealed letter to the nearest letter-box. It was addressed to :

*Brutus Cassius,*

*General Post-Office.*

*To be called for.*

Inside there were only three words :

"I await you."

The following morning Lisca brought her mistress a card.

"Giulio Cadama" was a familiar name ; but the words, "Brutus Cassius," in pencil underneath, made the widow turn pale for an instant.

Cadama entered the room, clothed as usual in black, but a half-blown rose to-day gave a touch of color to his somber costume. He bowed deferentially, and said :

"I trust you will pardon the mysterious method I employed to obtain permission to broach a subject of great importance to both of us. The affair is of such weight *signora*, that I wanted to be quite certain of your co-operation before I acknowledged that 'Brutus Cassius' and your Italian teacher are one. Before I

“speak, I must beg that, in case you refuse to aid me, you will not for one year tell any one of my plans? Your promise will be sufficient, *signora*.”

“I promise,” in a firm voice responded the widow. Then summoning her maid, she bade her bring some wine, and told her to admit no other visitors.

The little Hungarian maid nodded her coquettish head understandingly, and vanished to obey the order. Frau Von Hilgersdorf opened the doors leading to the adjoining rooms, in order to prevent eavesdropping at the keyholes, then seated herself opposite her visitor.

“I am ready to hear your disclosure, *signor*,” she said with affected unconcern, sipping her wine.

Signor Cadama drew up his long, lean body, and resting his chin on his hand began :

“I shall try to be as brief as possible, *signora*. Two years ago I, who must no longer conceal from you that I am one of the most sought-after *avvocates* in Rome, was visited at my office by a lad who wished me to accompany him to a house in an obscure part of the city, where his mother, a poor deserted creature, lay dying. She had sent for me to make a confession. I am a native of the Eternal City, *signora*, and have had ample opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with many of its secrets. Rome is no more the city of the Romans, but an international *rendezvous* for all nations, and because wanderers from all points of the compass congregate on the seven hills by the Tiber, it is natural that much misery is to be found there. The traveler who visits the city merely to view the points of interest sees nothing of its wretchedness, but he who, like myself, is forced to look upon the reverse side of the glittering exterior, and who is familiar with the terrible suffering and want hidden amid the picturesque confusion of ancient buildings, is familiar with it all.



"AN INTERESTING COINCIDENCE SURELY," LUCIA SAYS.—*See Page 140.*



"My experience taught me that I was right in guessing that a mystery was to be unraveled in that poverty-stricken mansard. It was a wretched hole to which the weeping lad conducted me. An abode, *signor*, in which you would not have let your dogs live. So small, so low, there was hardly room to turn or stand upright. A broken table, a footstool and a bundle of straw scattered on the stone floor completed the furnishing. A close, evil-smelling atmosphere greeted me when I entered the pen. I hastily opened the narrow window, for even the malaria-laden air of the filthy street was better than the atmosphere of the close room. Covered with rags and suffering with the pains of death, the woman lay on her bed of straw. From a sallow, attenuated face gleamed two large black eyes, which must once have glowed with splendid beauty; but which now glittered with the light of fever. Her trembling hands drew me down to her miserable couch. I had to bend my ear close to her lips to hear the almost unintelligible whisper. That which the dying woman revealed to me was certainly enough to make me forget the noisome surroundings.

"Carmella Boccani—the name of the woman—had had a full share of romance and adventure. When a child she had tended goats on the *campagna*; had played on the banks of the Tiber; had woven baskets of rushes, which she filled with flowers, and which her father, a worthy goatherd, sold in the *cafés* along the Corso. From the seclusion of the *campagna* pastures a young German artist lifted the budding beauty. The artist, whose name to-day is among the most distinguished of his craft, had searched long and vainly among the crowds on the Via Sistina for a model for a sword-dancer. Carmella was just what he wanted. An agreement was soon made, the sittings began, and six

months later the sword-dancer, with Carmella's face and form, enchanted the visitors at the Vienna Art Exhibition.

"In that time Carmella had learned much. She had become conscious of her beauty and of its power over our sex. When she quitted the artist's studio after the last posing, she had ceased to be the simple little goat-tender and had become a dangerous enchantress.

"Carmella Boccani," continued the advocate, after a brief pause, "enjoyed a short season of happiness and prosperity, during which she was the most celebrated model in Rome. Then she fell in love a fellow-model, a rollicking youth with classic form and features, and became his wife. Their marriage was solemnized in a little chapel of the San Maria Maggiore church, and was followed by a feast in one of the *trattoria* in the Trastevere, to which all the models in Rome were invited. It was a merry evening — perhaps the last merry evening of poor Carmella's eventful life ; for already the next day began the sorrows of an ill-matched union. The handsome Nicolo proved an ill-natured brute, and beat his little wife so cruelly that she had no more pleasure in living. There was nothing more to be made by posing, for the war had robbed the artists of all desire to work. But neither Nicolo nor Carmella had learned to do anything but pose as models. They went to Naples, hoping to find employment there, but were disappointed. Then Nicolo's treatment of his wife became so brutal she summoned her courage and fled from him. At that time all Italy was a gigantic camp. In every portion of my blessed land weapons clanked aggressively ; and the furies of war rejoiced over the hecatombs offered to them. Revolution ruled the hour. Austria, France and Savoy battled on the shores of the Adriatic. It was a time of tur-

moil, and matched the despairing mood of the woman who had fled from her natural protector to find peace in the warring world. Carmella sought refuge with Garibaldi's *chasseurs*. Many of those who wore the red blouse had, in better days, thrown coin into the lap of the pretty model of the Scala di Spagne; and all of those sons of freedom welcomed Carmella to their ranks.

“‘*La bella Carmella*’ was not an unattractive picture in her becoming *vivandière* costume, flame-colored bodice and skirt, below which peeped dainty high boots. She marched with the Alpine heroes as long as she was able, which was not long. In a little village in lower Ticino a little daughter was born to Carmella. From the very first hour the tiny bit of humanity opened its eyes on the world it had a hard time of it. Her father was somewhere on the blue Mediterranean, and her mother was unfortunate in having this living burden added to her cares. What should she do with the little puling creature, whose coal-black eyes were a constant reminder of the cruel beatings she had endured from its father? A lucky chance, perhaps, prevented Carmella from resorting to an unwomanly act. In the cottage of the vine-dresser, who had charitably sheltered Carmella in her hour of need, lodged two other strangers, an artist from Vienna and a Prussian officer, who was stationed on military duty near the seat of war. To these two men the vine-dresser related Carmella's situation. They responded with a liberal gift of money, the artist giving all the more cheerfully when he recognized in the unfortunate woman his model for the sword-dancer. The artist's name, *signorina*, you will find on the back of the little *bivouac* sketch in your *salon*. The Prussian officer in the vine-dresser's cottage was Herr Von Hilgersdorf, your deceased husband.”

Frau Von Hilgersdorf was unable to conceal a slight start; but she made no reply, and Cadama continued:

“Near the vine-dresser’s cottage was a handsome villa occupied by a wealthy German, a Baron Von Hackert-Selchern, who was living here in great retirement with his invalid wife. The only person with whom Baron Von Hackert held any communication was Herr Von Hilgersdorf, who was an old acquaintance, and who likely told the baron about the event which had happened at the cottage. One evening Herr Von Hilgersdorf had a long interview with Carmella, after which he repaired to the vine-dresser, and in a sorrowful tone told him a doctor was coming to see the newborn child which was very ill. Instead of a doctor, however, Baron Von Hackert came the next day and brought a large basket, filled with what appeared to be clothing. He had brought—so he told the vine-dresser—some linen for the poor mother and her sick baby. His own wife expected soon to be in a similar condition, and he felt it his duty to help a suffering fellow-Christian. The baron then had an interview with Carmella, after which he hastily and with a pale face quitted the cottage, carrying the covered basket on his arm.

“The vine-dresser was loud in his praise of the distinguished German’s generosity, and lamented his own inability to do more for the sick woman. Hilgersdorf cautioned the worthy man not to disturb the invalid, as the least excitement would only hasten the death of her weakly infant. That same evening a loud cry from Carmella summoned the inmates of the cottage to her room, where they found the poor woman weeping over the cold body of her dead child. I had forgotten to mention, *signora*, that Carmella was an excellent actress. The following morning news came of the birth of a

little daughter at the villa. The child was strong and hearty, but its birth cost the mother her life.

"According to the last wishes of the baron's wife she was buried in the village graveyard, close by the side of the little mound which covered Carmella Boccani's baby. Carmella went to the villa as nurse for the baron's motherless little daughter for a few weeks until the nurse, who had been sent from Germany, arrived. Shortly after the arrival of the German nurse, the baron took his departure, first giving Carmella many valuable presents. The vine-dresser and his wife stood by the roadside to see the baron's carriage pass, and to admire the baby which, wrapped in shawls and veils, lay in the nurse's arms. The vine-dresser could not say enough about the kindness of the baron, who had left a large sum of money to pay the gravedigger for attending to the grave of the baroness and that of Carmella's baby.

"My story might conclude here, *signora*, did I not think you would care to hear more about Carmella. After Baron Von Hackert's departure, it was said that Herr Von Hilgersdorf—" at this point Cadama slightly elevated his eyebrows—"interested himself for a time in the poor woman. Then Carmella went back to her regiment until the peace of Villefranca concluded the war in upper Italy, when she returned to her brutal husband. In due time she bore him a son, a handsome youth whom she named Francisco, after her father.

"Nicolo had ceased passing for artists and had become a coral fisher, to which trade he at last fell a victim. His body was cast ashore one morning after a fearful storm. In one hand he clutched a superb branch of rose coral, in the other the amulet which he had torn from his neck in his death struggles, and

which had failed to protect him from the anger of the sea.

“Thus Carmella found herself once more alone in the world. The war having broken out anew, she left her boy with a neighbor, and once more joined Garibaldi’s troops. Singularly enough, in the midst of the tumult of war, she was overpowered by a desire to see her first-born, whom we suppose lay sleeping in the churchyard of the little village at the foot of the Alps. She could not suppress the strange yearning, so she bade her comrades farewell, and wandered northward, inquiring at every camp, every barracks for an officer named Hilgersdorf. Whether or not she found him the poor creature had not enough breath left to tell me. From her last gasped words, I could learn only that she had wandered back to Rome, where she had had a severe struggle to keep starvation from her door. That, *signora*, is the history of ‘*la bella Carmella*!’”

The *signor* bowed lightly in concluding, and moistened his lips with a few drops of Tokay.

Frau Von Hilgersdorf was silent for several moments. She leaned back and toyed idly with the silken tassels which ornamented her chair.

“Your story is very interesting, *signor*,” she said, at length, “but there are a few gaps that need to be filled. Suppose we accept that Lucia is the child of Carmella Boccani, and that she was exchanged for Colonel Von Hackert’s still-born daughter. Might not the colonel have adopted her, and thus have made her his legal heir?”

Cadama smiled.

“The colonel did not adopt the child for a very good reason, *signora*,” he returned. “Such an act would have proclaimed to the world that his daughter was the child of a vagrant wanderer, born on a straw-pallet.

You are sufficiently acquainted with the world's malevolence, *signora*, to know what value is placed on 'blue-blood.' Society would never cease to comment and gossip, and father and daughter would have had to endure many disagreeable hints and reminders of the fair girl's lowly origin. You know what a proud man the colonel was. I don't doubt that he thought often of adopting the girl, but he had neglected the important act at the proper time—just after he had taken the infant from its mother. Later, he could not have done it without compromising both himself and Lucia. Besides, no one but Carmella and Von Hilgersdorf knew of the secret exchange of infants. The former could not have proved that Lucia was her child, as there had been no witnesses of the exchange, and it is not likely that Von Hilgersdorf would ever mention the fact, as, according to Prussian law, an exchange of that sort is a punishable crime, and he had been a willing assistant. And then, was not your husband an intimate friend of Colonel Hackert's?"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf shook her head in negation.

"He was once," she said, "but in his last years I think my husband was anything but friendly toward the colonel."

Again the Italian smiled meaningly.

"I fancy I can guess the cause of your husband's enmity, *signora*," he responded. "Hackert evidently was familiar with some questionable episode in the general's past—I trust you will pardon my plain speaking, *signora*—"

"I beg you not to conceal anything from me," interposed the widow, waving her hand. "I consider it necessary that I should know everything in order that we may fully understand each other. You are probably aware that I was little more than a child when I

became the general's wife. His past life is unknown to me. But tell me first : Does Lucia know the secret of her birth ?”

“I think I may safely say she does. She is what one may truthfully call a ‘swindler.’ She has the audacity to wear a bold front in society ; to live sumptuously on money which belongs to the legal heir. Are not *you* convinced that her nature is utterly depraved ?” he asked in a meaning tone. “I know very well that your delicate feelings prompt you to take no notice of that scandalous article in the newspaper ; but I believe all Berlin would applaud were you to help me to rid society of a character at once so dangerous and so undesirable.”

An imperceptible smile of triumph crossed Cadama's thin lips when he saw how the little hand, resting on the arm of the chair, trembled with excitement :

“Almost I am tempted to believe,” he resumed, “that you still think Lucia incapable of such infamous behavior toward you. It *is* difficult to believe, I confess—and yet, I have the proof here.” He took a note from his letter-case. “Let me read what Dr. Rahlou writes : ‘I have the honor to assure you that the first hint of the article, “What Love Will Do,” originated in the brain of Miss Von Hackert-Selchern, and not in my own—’ See for yourself, *signora*. Let Rahlou's words convince you.”

Frau Von Hilgersdorf cast only a fleeting glance at the signature to the note—she desired no further proof.

A cruel expression had settled around her beautiful mouth when she inquired :

“You are Herr Von Hackert's attorney, I believe ?”

“Yes, *signora*. I am trying to secure for the young man the fortune which is illegally held by Carmella

Boccani's daughter. The colonel's will bequeaths everything—save a few insignificant legacies—to his *daughter*. His daughter lies beside her mother in the little churchyard at Ticino ; therefore the will is contestable. At the time he made the will Colonel Von Hackert had no daughter."

"Why don't you appeal directly to the courts!" suddenly queried Frau Von Hilgersdorf.

"Simply because Carmella and General Von Hilgersdorf, the only persons who could assist me as witnesses, are in their graves."

"Do you think my husband left among his private papers any documents relating to the exchange of infants?" asked the widow, fixing a sharp glance on the attorney's face.

Cadama hesitated a moment before replying. He adjusted his cravat, passed his fingers around his neck as if his collar annoyed him, then said :

"No, *signora*, I don't think he did."

"Then in what way do you expect me to help you, if not in that?" abruptly demanded Frau Von Hilgersdorf.

Again the wily Italian hesitated before answering.

"If no proofs are at hand, we must find a way to get some!"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf started. From the first she had suspected that the Italian intended some rascality. Before she could reply, however, he added :

"Allow me to explain, *signora*. It is quite certain that Lucia is not the daughter of Colonel Von Hackert and his wife. This much conceded, then she certainly has no right to hold the fortune which belongs legally to my client. Unfortunately, the only witnesses who could aid me in establishing my case are dead. We are, therefore, powerless to right a great wrong. *Per*

*bacco*, I don't think one ought to hesitate to aid justice! Your conscience, *signora*, is more delicate than mine. I have had too much to do with all sorts of criminals. I shall not tell you all that I propose to do. I ask you only to lend me some of your husband's writings—something of no importance whatever—and I promise you that a document shall be forthcoming which will effectually prevent Lucia Boccani from further masquerading as a scion of the noble race of Hackert-Selchern!"

The widow had risen to her feet. Her face was very pale; her lips were pressed closely together; her frame trembled. But the cruel expression around her mouth was more strongly marked, and between her arched brows lay a fine line that told of an inflexible determination.

"You are a finished diplomat, Signor Cadama," she said curtly. "I am afraid I should not have consented to aid you had you been more explicit. As it is, Brutus Cassius has not applied to me in vain! Come with me, we will take a look at my deceased husband's papers."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Signor Cadama, a short time afterward, quitted the widow's residence, he stopped on the staircase to brush the large drops of perspiration from his forehead. His lips twitched convulsively as he muttered in a tone that sounded like the hissing of a snake:

"Almost at the goal! They have all gone into the net—the web of lies I spun from a hundred threads. All of them, the student, the journalist, the widow, and my little countryman on the St. Gothard, all—all! And as for you, my haughty Lucia, my star-eyed beauty, I don't think you will reject the man who alone can save your fortune and the honor of your second father."



## CHAPTER XV.

NO!

"This is beautiful, very beautiful, indeed!" exclaimed Counselor Dreyfuss. "Just look there, Waldau—and there! That is the Mythenstein, and that beyond it the Uri-Rothstock."

Waldau turned his glass toward the pyramids of rock which raised themselves from the level of the shimmering lake, while the counselor continued enthusiastically:

"Beautiful! Beautiful! This delicious mountain perfume and the fresh breeze from the water fill one with the most delightful sensations, and almost make one forget the coffee which has been waiting to be drunk for ten minutes or more. There, now, put aside your ballet-scrutinizer, my dear Waldau, or else turn it in yon direction, and tell me if you can see anything of the women-folk? I fancied I caught a glimpse of my wife's red cap-ribbons."

Dreyfuss and the artist stepped back from the lattice which inclosed the hotel garden. At the same moment the "women-folk" appeared from behind some shrubbery. Frau Therese, her round face beaming with

health, the inevitable knitting-bag on her arm, Lucia Von Hackert and Frau Von Sporken.

Waldau, who, after sketching a few days on the St. Gothard, had met the counselor's party here—not altogether by chance—the day before, walked quickly toward the ladies.

“*‘Hüll'n sich am Abend die Berge in Dunst,  
Lächelt am Morgen die Sonne mit Gunst,’*”

he quoted, when he came up with them. “Didn't I tell you yesterday evening that to-day would be fine? The thunder-storm you predicted, Fräulein Lucia, has not come to pass, so we may, after all, carry out our plans for the sail.”

“I am very glad, for I know I shall enjoy it,” returned Lucia. “I want to become acquainted with the entire shore of this beautiful lake, with all of those glorious peaks, with Flüelen and Tellsplatte, Trieb and the Rütliwiese—”

“Come! Come!” here interposed the counselor. “Let us finish the discussion over our coffee. The lank Ganymede under your tent is in despair because he has been forced, for the last fifteen minutes, to defend the honey against the greedy onslaughts of two flies. Your arm, Therese.”

Breakfast had been served under a little canvas baldachin. It was a charming nook. The view of lake and mountain was unobstructed. The water glittered like silver—a deep green near the hither shore, darker, almost black on the further side, where the mountains were reflected as in a mirror.

The conversation was merry and interspersed with laughter. Waldau had to relate how he came to decide so suddenly on a sketching tour among the Swiss mountains, and where he had been sojourning until

now. The last question was asked by Fräulein Von Hackert, who had already heard of his visit to Rosenholz from Annie Doring; and who sought, with true feminine diplomacy, to turn the conversation on the "disinherited one."

Waldau thereupon frankly told of his visit to the Dorings, and succeeded in winning from Herr Dreyfuss many a softly muttered "Incredible!" and from Frau Therese several teardrops.

The counselor glanced stealthily around the coffeeurn toward his spouse; the tears which rolled slowly over her plump cheeks and lost themselves in the lace ruff about her neck angered him. He feared a more violent exhibition of her feelings, and hastened to change the subject.

"The boat has been ordered for ten o'clock," he said, looking at his watch. "It is time to get ready. We will row first to Trieb, and walk from there toward the Seelisberg and the Rütli. The wine over yonder is said to be particularly good, which certainly is an attraction!"

They rose to fetch wraps and rugs from the hotel. At the entrance the porter handed a telegram to the counselor, who tore it hastily open, read it, then thrust it into his pocket.

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope?" observed Frau Therese, who had a perfect horror of everything pertaining to the electric wire, which she said was overhasty and malign.

"Certainly not," replied her husband, bustling forward, "only a business message from Vienna."

While in his room the counselor was suddenly seized with a most torturing toothache. It was very unfortunate, very, and very inopportune, but he knew that if he exposed himself to the cool air on the lake, the pain

would become intolerable ! He begged, therefore, that the little party would go without him. Waldau was perfectly familiar with all the points of interest, and would prove an excellent guide and escort.

He was excused of course, but amid sincerest regret and sympathy. Frau Therese insisted on stopping with him, to prepare hot camomile compresses for the aching molar, but the sufferer would not hear of such self-sacrifice. The smell of camomile made him ill ; besides, his tooth would likely cease aching if he remained perfectly quiet in his room.

So the little party went without him, and embarked in the boat which was waiting for them. Herr Dreyfuss, his handkerchief to his face, waved a farewell from the balcony of the hotel, then the boat pushed off and trailed a silvery wake through the rippling waves.

As the distance lengthened between the shore and the receding boat, the counselor's tooth seemed to grow less troublesome. At all events, he whistled cheerily as he reëntered the hotel, and sought the porter, who was seated in front of his key-rack, like Cerberus at the entrance to Hades.

"At what hour does the steamer arrive from Flüelen ?" asked Herr Dreyfuss.

"At eleven, sometimes half-past, if it is very windy and the waves are high," was the reply.

"Thanks. Be good enough to see that there is served in my room promptly at eleven, a lunch for two, a bottle of Madeira, and one of Veuve-Cliquot."

Cerberus bowed a deferential assent, less to the person of the one who gave the order than to the order itself.

The counselor went into the garden and threw himself into a rocking-chair that stood close to the lattice.

From here he had a clear view of the entire lake. Half-way up the stretch of water was a dark object above which hung a light-gray cloud. It was the steamer. At precisely eleven o'clock the counselor stood waiting on the landing. About him crowded the fisher-lads, with rolled up trousers, their dirty fingers grasping nosebags of violets, and baskets containing wood-carvings. The boatmen stood alongside their boats, waiting to land the passengers from the steamer. Carriers in their blue-striped blouses, and hotel porters in their hideous international uniforms bustled about on the landing. A number of guests from the hotels were seated on the iron benches along the shore. Shaded by a red umbrella, a youthful artist was sketching the scene. He was smiling with satisfaction, for he had descried among the throng a long-legged Briton who, with his mackintosh and plaid and rimless hat, offered a striking central point for his picture.

The steamer puffed nearer, the anchor rattled into the waves, sending foam in all directions. The boats shot out from the shore ; the steamer's ladder was lowered, and a stream of passengers poured over the side. The band on deck played a lively march ; and, mingling with the rather discordant sound, was the buzz of a hundred voices ; the cries of luggage carriers and porters ; and the shrill calls from the captain's whistle.

"Allow me," repeated the counselor, as he shoved unceremoniously to the right and left the persons who barred his passage. The next instant he lifted from the boat, which had just landed, a slight, shawl-enveloped woman, pressed her to his breast, and, in presence of all the world, kissed her on lips, cheeks and brow !

"All alone, my little Annie? My little runaway!" he exclaimed jestingly, as he tucked her under his arm, and marched her toward the hotel. "Alone, and without the permission of your lord and master? Did you really want to see old grimbeard so badly? Do you really love old uncle a little bit after all! Even if he was a little angry because his kitten showed her sharp claws! Just wait, you madcap! I have a whole series of lectures for you, *in petto*! Humph, incredible! She goes off without a by-your-leave, and the old uncle may see how he gets his bird back again!"

"Wasn't the old uncle to blame for the flight of his bird?" queried Annie, glancing roguishly at the counselor's face, which was beaming with satisfaction.

"We shall see about that, my dear, and the punishment shall be accordingly. In any case, I have you fast enough now, and your husband must come himself and fetch you if he wants you back!"

"But, my dear uncle," interposed Annie, "Hans is coming to Rosenholz on Sunday, and if I am not there to greet him he will be inconsolable."

"If the mountain won't come to the prophet, Mohammed must journey to the mountain," laughingly responded her uncle. "Doring is an obstinate fellow, and so am I. We shall see which of us has the harder head. Your aunt and Lucia and old Sporken have rowed over to the Rütli, so we shall have time for a good long chat. You naughty child! I had made up my mind to give you a good scolding, and now that you are here I don't know how to begin."

"Is it necessary, uncle? Is not this the first and only time I have had to beg your pardon? You have no idea how good and obedient I mean to be, now that you aren't angry at Hans any more—"

"Ho, ho! not so fast, my dear," he interrupted. "I

haven't said I wasn't angry at Hans. On the contrary, I have a fine large crow to pick with Hans, I can tell you!"

They were now seated at the lunch table. Annie had not changed in the least. She was the same clear-headed sensible little woman. Her eyes were brighter—they shone with a great happiness. And just now there was a mischievous smile around the red lips which rarely opened to harmless jesting.

"Oh, my dear uncle!" she exclaimed feelingly, "I can't tell you how happy I am at thought of you and Hans becoming reconciled. I am so happy with my dear husband that I cannot imagine a happier existence. There is only one thing wanting, dear uncle—your blessing. I could not endure it any longer. I just had to come and ask you to forgive me, and to say a good word for my poor Hans, who was only an accomplice, and not the sole author of the crime we committed against you. He would not have consented to let me come had he known—much as he admires you, in spite of your cruel treatment of him—for he is afraid you might attribute our advances to mercenary motives, he is so very sensitive on that point. So I just came without telling him. And there he is, on the Gothard, working away with all his might for the good of all mankind, while I am sitting comfortably here, working for my own selfish end. However," with an imploring glance at her uncle, "I don't think the satisfactory result of my scheming is so far distant, do you, dear uncle?"

But her uncle was obtuse, or pretended to be so. Not even the coaxing smile with which she extended to him the glass of champagne cleared his serious face.

"I don't see what I have to do with any results—satisfactory or otherwise," he mumbled, draining his glass.

This was too much! Annie sprang to her feet, seized a lapel of his coat in each hand and vainly trying to shake his huge bulk, cried:

"You wicked, cruel, horrid uncle! Can I do more than prostrate myself at your feet and beg pardon for following the dictates of my heart? What more can you want—pray?"

The counselor, evidently, was not going to allow anything to disturb his gastronomic enjoyment. He lifted a turkey-wing to his plate and began to carve it.

"I forgave *you* long ago, my dear Annie," he observed.

"*Me?* Forgive me? What good is that? I am Hans; and Hans and I are one. If you don't forgive both, you don't forgive either! Man and wife are one. That is what the Bible says, and you can take from it what inference you choose, uncle!"

Her uncle speared a large piece of white meat on his fork before replying.

"You are a regular philosopher in petticoats, my dear. But, seriously, can you really want me, an old man, to travel to Göschenen and beg your young husband not to be angry at me because he ran away with my darling child?"

"Certainly not! At least, not just that, uncle. You will not understand me. I want nothing more than a mutual advance—"

"Ah!" interrupted the uncle. "And suppose that I think it the young man's place to come to me?"

Annie wrung her hands.

"Just what Hans says!" she exclaimed in desperation. "Oh, but you are a pair of obstinates! Your stubbornness tears to bits my beautifully woven diplomatic-net. I am at the end of my wisdom. I may as well journey back whence I came."

"Not just yet," laughingly supplemented the counselor, gnawing at the turkey-wing. "That is not to be thought of for several weeks at least. Indeed, I may make up my mind to keep you months!"

"And my husband?" suggested Annie.

"If he wants you very much he will fetch you."

Annie paused a moment; she had an idea.

"Very well," she said at length, "I'll stop with you as long as I can. One favor I demand in return—an equivalent, so to speak. Do you consent?"

"Let us hear the 'equivalent,' and I'll consider. I don't altogether trust you, since you defied my authority and ran away from me."

Annie laughed, then said:

"I will tell you what I want. I am to be allowed to continue my diplomatic maneuvers without interference from *any one*! Are you agreed?"

"Oh, I'll agree to anything, provided you do not require my personal interest."

"I shall not. Our agreement is settled then, and I shall at once begin operations. Excuse me a moment, please, I want to do a little correspondence."

She stepped to the writing-table, and hastily penned several lines on a note-sheet, then she rang the bell and gave the note to the servant.

"Take this to the telegraph office," she ordered. "Now, my dear uncle," she continued, resuming her seat at the table. "My day's word is completed. You may fill my glass, and we will drink to my final result!"

The counselor lifted his glass, then suddenly lowered it.

"You have hatched some diabolical plot, I'll be bound!" he exclaimed suspiciously. "Come now, confess!"

"With all my heart, since the telegram is already on its way. The message was to Engineer Doring and read: 'If you want Annie, you must fetch her yourself. Dreyfuss, Hotel Adler, Brunnen.' "

For several seconds the counselor remained speechless.

"Oh, you rogue! You *arch-intrigante!*" he exclaimed. "You have cheated me after all! What a Bismarck or a Cavour you would have made! Who in the world taught you to be so artful?"

Annie's eyes danced.

"Love, dear uncle; love taught me," she returned merrily. "You and Hans had to be reconciled, and as there was no straightforward way to accomplish it, I choose a crooked way! Now just be patient. Day after to-morrow, at the latest, will see Hans here; then will follow reconciliation, harmony, peace! What will you wager on it?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Diplomat, you are a great deal too clever for me. Humph! Incredible! I have been tricked, cheated, for the first time in my life, and by a bit of a woman! Well, I suppose I'll have to bear it! But I will not let you escape without punishment. Come here and kiss me!"

It is needless to add that Annie submitted to her punishment with commendable patience!

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile the boat containing Herr Waldau and the ladies cleft its way through the green waves. Two skilled oarsmen sent the little craft flying like an arrow across the shimmering surface. Brunnen, with its cheerful houses, and the towering mountains beyond it, was a charming picture. To the westward stretched the verdant Muotta Valley, hemmed in on either side by fir-clad mountains, whose snowy summits glittered in the sunlight.

The boat landed at Treib, opposite Brunnen ; and the party went ashore, to continue the journey on wheels as far as the Sulisberg thence on foot to the Rütli.

Frau Dreyfuss was already weary. She felt as if she were "bruised from sole to crown." She had experienced a slight *mal de mer*, while in the boat ; and, moreover, she was just a trifle uneasy about her suffering husband. She upbraided herself for not stopping with him to poultice the aching jaw. "Dreyfuss is such a careless person when it concerns his own health."

Her companions sought in every way to comfort her, and Elimar hastened to an inn for some brandy, to prevent a probable return of the seasickness.

The ardent "water of life" seemed to cheer and refresh Frau Therese, and in a few minutes she was able to climb to her seat in the carriage beside Frau Von Sporken and Lucia. Waldau swung himself to the box beside the coachman, who cracked his whip and sang out, in his quaint Swiss-French : "*En avant !*" and they were off, at a brisk gallop, toward the mountains.

"Although the road, with its numerous curves and turns, was a charming sight, it was not to be compared with the enchanting view which stretched beneath the pleasure party when they reached the Sulisberg. From the balcony of the hotel, where some refreshment was enjoyed, our friends looked down on a scene of magnificent beauty. Far below lay the glittering lake, the sail-boats skimming its shimmering surface, looking like tiny swans. All around them were verdant forests ; and beyond, the glance was lost in the spurs of the Rigi, which were dotted with picturesque villages and hamlets.

Snow white and pale-green, flaming crimson and

dull brown ; black and pale yellow, emerald and azure—all these hues were artistically mingled on the earth-palette by the hand of nature.

Frau Therese was the only one of the party who found little enjoyment in the view. She was tired ; and held her handkerchief to her eyes because the dazzling light blinded her. She had a headache, too ; and almost became indignant when Waldau ventured to suggest that they would better be moving onward before the hot mid-day sun made the jaunt more wearisome.

Frau Von Sporken also complained of weariness ; so Lucia and Elimar were alone in their desire to press forward to the region celebrated in poetry and legend.

“The distance is not great, Fräulein Lucia,” said Waldau, “and you will be rewarded for your trouble. You certainly ought to see the most picturesque region of the lake,” he added urgently.

Lucia was silent for several moments. She glanced toward Frau Von Sporken, then said hastily, as if ashamed of her hesitation :

“I will go, Herr Waldau. Frau Dreyfuss and Aunt Sporken can rest here while we take our walk to the Rütli. I hope—” casting a scrutinizing glance at the sky—“those dark clouds over yonder will be gracious enough to pass harmlessly over our heads. It would not be very pleasant to be caught in a shower.”

Frau Therese lifted her *lorgnette* and surveyed the cloud-masses in the western sky. It certainly looked very threatening. The wind in this region was not to be trusted. They would have done better had they stopped at Brunnen, with the poor counselor and his aching tooth.

Lucia laughed at the old lady's apprehensions, and

Elimar had the barometer to support his assertion that the day would continue fine.

At last Lucia threw a shawl over her arm—in case it should happen to rain—and the two young people set out on their promenade.

They walked sturdily side by side. The pedestrians they met on the road halted to look after and admire the handsome pair—the slender, blonde youth and the graceful girl, with her sparkling, black eyes. They were very silent at first, and yet there was much they would have liked to say to each other.

A secret feeling of alarm had taken hold of Lucia. It was the fear to be alone with the man who loved her, for that Waldau loved her Lucia knew very well—had known it for a long time. Elimar's heart also beat anxiously. When they reached the shade of the forest, where the breeze stirred the foliage to gentle murmuring, a dreamy, poetic sensation took possession of his heart. It would have been impossible for him to drop into a commonplace conversation—far rather would he have given vent to his feelings in song, far rather have knelt at her feet and confessed his love.

There was no sound save the rustling of the trees and the songs of the birds, but Elimar fancied he could hear a tender murmur from the grass beneath their feet. The soft swish of Lucia's dark gown was music in his ears—he felt every one of her graceful movements. Her eyes were bent on the ground ; she seemed buried in deep thought. Of whom, of what was she thinking ? The silence was broken at last by the sound of hilarious singing. At a turn of the road appeared three young men who, with their hats perched jauntily sideways on their heads, their faces flushed and merry, were shouting a *Volkslied* that echoed and re-echoed among the rocks.

The sound roused Elimar from his dreaming. He became suddenly conscious that he was a very uninteresting comrade for a mountain-walk. What must his fair companion think of his forgetfulness? Forgetfulness? Great Heaven! Could she but know that his every thought was filled with her—only her!

Waldau forced himself to speak indifferently. He talked of one thing and another, and seemed not to notice that Lucia became more and more reserved and silent.

When they arrived at the meadow, the conversation turned to classical subjects. Lucia drank of the sacred waters of the three springs, then looked across at Tell's chapel, which marks the spot where the valiant cross-bowman escaped from the bailiff. Suddenly Lucia became aware that Frau Therese's prognostications concerning the weather were likely to be fulfilled after all. The clouds had increased in volume and density, the green of the lake had changed to steel-gray, fretted with white foam-caps; and a keen wind blew down from the snow-summits.

"That means an Alpine storm," said the young girl, pointing to the clouds; then she smilingly declaimed:

" ' Wenn der Sturm

*In dieser Wasserkluft sich erst verfangen,  
Dann rast er um sich mit des Raubthiers Angst,  
Das an des Gitters Eisenstäbe schlägt!  
Die Pforte sucht er heulend sich vergebens;  
Denn ringsum schranken ihn die Felsen ein,  
Die himmelhoch den ganzen Pass vermauern! "*

"How faultlessly you quote it, miss!" admiringly exclaimed Waldau. "I, too, have read my Schiller, and once could repeat even Tell's monologue and Attinghausen's '*Seid einig, einig, einig!*' But you are right; those clouds begin to look portentous. I don't think

the storm will break very soon, but perhaps we had better return at once."

Lucia assented, and they began to retrace their steps.

Elimar was no weather prophet. The threatening storm burst with a suddenness and fury that startled our wanderers. They had not gone far when the heavy thunder reverberated through the forest, the trees bent beneath the furious gale and large drops of rain rustled on the leaves. It became suddenly dark. The blue sky overhead became obscured by heavy sulphur-hued clouds, which seemed to hang close above the trees; the wind moaned and shrieked; flash of vivid lightning succeeded flash so swiftly that the thunder rumbled continuously.

At the approach of the gale Lucia had taken shelter underneath a gigantic beech-tree, and clasped her arms around the mossy trunk. The wind tore at her garments; heavy raindrops pelted her face and bare head, from which her hat had fallen.

"We must not stop here," said Elimar, who was hardly able to stand upright against the furious wind. "The rain will presently fall in torrents. Lean on me, and we will try to get as far as the projecting rock, where we met the singers when we came up. We shall, doubtless, find a dry shelter there until the storm has passed."

Lucia did as he bid her; she laid her hand on his arm, and felt plainly how closely he pressed it against his side.

They descended slowly, for the path was very steep and covered with loose stones. Suddenly Lucia uttered a sharp cry of pain and sank to the ground.

"For heaven's sake, miss, what is the matter?" exclaimed Elimar, bending anxiously over her.

The girl tried to smile; but failed utterly.

"We are unlucky," she whispered with white lips. "I made a misstep and turned my ankle. It will be all right again in a few minutes."

But she was mistaken; the injury was worse than she imagined. With Elimar's help she rose to her feet, but was obliged to lean on him for support.

"I—I must—sit down," she gasped. "The pain is still very intense. I am afraid I can't walk—just yet."

As she was speaking the rain began in earnest, and fell, a very deluge, on the defenseless pair.

"It is madness to think of stopping here," exclaimed Waldau in desperation. "You will be thoroughly drenched. In three minutes we can reach the sheltering rock. Necessity knows no law, miss, I must carry you."

He loosed the shawl from her arm, wrapped it about her shoulders; then, lifting the light burden in his arms, hurried onward.

He bent forward in order to shield her as much as possible from the rain, unconsciously pressing her closely to his breast, in which his heart beat with a blessed hope. The rock was reached. A huge, overhanging boulder formed a sheltering roof, beneath which nature had also provided several convenient rock seats.

On one of these Elimar carefully deposited his precious burden. His knightly act had been successful—Lucia had escaped much of the heavy rain from which her carrier's body had shielded her.

"Does your ankle still pain?" he asked, dropping lightly on one knee in front of her. "Perhaps it would feel better if the boot were removed. May I assist you?"

Lucia face flushed slightly :

"Thank you, Herr Waldau; the pain is not so great

now. See, I can stand on my foot again !” she added, rising, and smiling brightly down on him.

He did not move, but lifted his handsome face pleadingly to hers, and all the love of his heart beamed in the eyes he fixed with a speaking glance on hers :

“ Lucia !” he exclaimed, in a low, intense tone. “ Lucia, hear me. I do not deserve to live if I let this hour pass without begging you to decide whether I am to be happy or wretched for the remainder of my life. I love you, Lucia. You must have known it the first day I met you. I have hidden the secret in my heart for many anxious months, fearing to reveal it to you. My cowardice has made me suffer until I can no longer endure it. I must know my fate—it is in your hands, Lucia. Lucia, I love you, I love you ! Speak, my dearest, may I hope ?”

Lucia stood before him, her hands pressed against her heart. Her face was pale, her eyelids drooped—she might have been an image of marble but for the gently pulsating breast.

“ Lucia !” passionately repeated Waldau. “ Speak to me ! I love you—more than life ! I do not care to live if I may not live for you. Speak, Lucia, is it ‘ yes ’ or ‘ no ! ’ ”

“ No !” burst from the girl’s pallid lips, as her arms fell limply to her sides. She swayed, as if unable longer to stand upright, but conquered her weakness.

“ Pray rise, Herr Waldau,” she said calmly. “ I want to say something to you. I am going to be frank and truthful, though it will pain me to be so. Of all the men who visited my father’s house you are the only one in whom I became interested, with whom I could sympathize. I was always glad to see you, to hear your voice, for you never flattered me. I was told that you were a genius, but I soon found it out for myself.

I admired your talents, and after awhile I began to be sorry for you. You are highly gifted, Herr Waldau. God has been specially good to you, and you—you do not think it worth your while to use your noble talents. You are an idler, a mere society butterfly. I can understand a man, who has never suffered adversity, leading such a life, but your youth was a sorrowful one, a season of bitter earnest that should have taught you that life was not all foam and glitter. I dare say you will think me presumptuous for talking thus to you, but I said I would be frank; my interest in you is too deep to be otherwise. There is in you that which ought to have made you a different sort of man. Why not let that something have its chance? Why not become the man you ought to be, the man God intended you to be? Cease being the weak, helpless child that floats aimlessly with the current, and become the strong man of energy and ambition I recognize in you in spite of the frivolous exterior. Turn from the companionship of those who are unworthy of your acquaintance, and show the world what you can do! God has given you all that is necessary to make a great name. Make it then in God's name! Use your noble talent, Elimar, use it to advantage, and when you have become the man you were born to be, no one will rejoice more than I."

Waldau stood as if crushed before the girl whose cheeks were flushed, whose eyes sparkled with enthusiasm.

He felt humiliated, deeply humiliated, because he knew that she spoke the truth. Could anything more painful have happened to him than to hear from those girl lips such words? How utterly insignificant he appeared in his own eyes! And yet, a blessed hope still lived in his heart. Would Lucia have spoken so can-

didly, so cruelly frank, had he been indifferent to her? No, no! Her words, "Become a man!" contained the pleading, the solicitude of true love.

Waldau seized the girl's right hand and kissed it.

"I thank you, miss," he said, in a low but firm tone. "I thank you for your candor. It is worth more to me than all the fair words you might have chosen to soften your rejection of my suit. You have held before me a mirror in which, for the first time in my life, I have seen myself as I really am. I do not defend myself. I cannot, but I do promise you, Lucia, nay, I swear most solemnly, in this hour of bitter humiliation, in presence of the all-powerful God, and by my own honor, that I will become a man! I will break with the past, I will cast from me my frivolous existence. And, Lucia," he added with still deeper earnestness. "I swear also that I will win *you*. If energy, ambition, work will accomplish it, you shall yet be mine!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Baron Von Menken sat at breakfast and glanced over the letters which had come in the morning mail. On the top lay an envelope which bore Elimar Waldau's familiar writing. The baron opened the letter and read:

"MY DEAR MENKEN:

"It is midnight; my candle is almost burned out; this pen is execrable and the ink half-dried. Therefore, you will excuse me if I write briefly. Three days ago I met, here in Brunnen, Counselor Dreyfuss, his wife, Frau Von Sporken and Lucia von Hackert. Yesterday afternoon will ever live in my memory, for it has changed the whole current of my life. I return to-morrow to Berlin; please tell Susanne to have my rooms ready, as I intend to go to work at once, and in earnest, on that picture I began long ago for the exhibition. I have done forever with a life of idleness. I intend to become a man! Don't question me Menken, but be my friend, my true friend, as always, and help me to become a man,

“A reconciliation between Dreyfuss and the Dorings is likely to be effected through the diplomacy of Annie, who arrived at Brunnen yesterday. The following telegram was received from her husband this evening: ‘Expect me and Francisco to-morrow.’ Francisco is a sort of upper servant, an Italian youth who saved Doring’s life at a dynamite explosion in the Gothard tunnel. I shall be glad if harmony is restored.

“*Auf Wiedersehen*, my dear Menken. Yours,

“ELIMAR.”

Waldau’s letter startled Herr Von Menken—not because it told him of the artist’s sudden determination to return to Berlin. It was Doring’s telegram—“Expect me and Francisco to-morrow”—which gave him food for thought. Who was this Francisco? Was he identical with the Francisco mentioned by Colonel Von Hackert in that last fateful conversation? Herr Von Menken laid Waldau’s letter to one side and proceeded to look over the rest of his mail. One envelope after another was opened, the contents of the note-sheets hastily scanned, then dropped into the waste-basket. Last of all the newspapers were examined. Among these the baron found Rahlou’s journal. Usually he merely glanced over this sheet, but this morning a paragraph in the local columns arrested his attention—perhaps because it seemed almost a continuation of the train of thought which Elimar’s letter had started in his brain.

“A highly sensational affair,” so ran the notice, “will, in the near future, interest our readers as well as our courts of justice. Knowing how eagerly our patrons will watch for developments, we have engaged the most efficient reportorial talent to supply us with the latest news concerning the affair. It has to do with a legacy of millions, at present illegally held by—not a masculine sinner steeped in crime, but by a young and lovely woman, who is sailing under false colors, parading as the daughter of a distinguished military officer. One of her confederates is a dissolute painter, who understands how to win the favor of good society. Those of our readers who are familiar with the ways of our so-called ‘good society’ will—”

The article continued with sneering denunciations of the "upper classes" and fulsome laudations of "honest labor."

Menken did not care to read further. The paper dropped from his hand. He felt as if he had received a blow. His brain became a confused whirl. A crimson sea surged before his eyes. Suddenly from the blood-red waves rose a pale, earnest face, and again he heard the words of his dying friend :

"Remember Saint-Estain, Menken, and guard my child, my Lucia !"

The baron sprang to his feet and paced the floor excitedly. He had no difficulty in guessing what was hinted in the sensational paragraph, nor was he at all in doubt as to the writer. The style betrayed Rahlou's pen. Besides, had not the journalist a grudge against Waldau, the "dissolute painter," who, it was well known, was deeply in love with Lucia von Hackert.

Suddenly Menken halted beside the door and touched the electric button.

"I am going to drive, Janisch, and want you to accompany me," he said to the servant who answered the summons.

Ten minutes later the baron's cart, with its cream-colored ponies, was at the door. Janisch took his place beside the coachman on the back seat ; Menken himself took the reins.

He drove swiftly toward the old Criminal Court ; but stopped when he got to the Gertraudenbrücke, gave the reins to the coachman, and alighting, proceeded on foot to the weather-beaten structure. He crossed the dusty square to the office of the police-commissioner and found the man he sought in the narrow cell-like apartment, the walls of which seemed formed of legal documents.

Herr Von Holgen greeted his visitor with great friendliness—the two men had become friends in the last campaign—then swept a pile of documents from the only chair in the room and gave it to the baron.

“Thank you,” returned Menken. “I will not detain you long, for I know you are busy. I came merely to ask a question. Have you read to-day’s newspapers?”

Holgen nodded.

“That question tells me what brought you here,” he responded. “You, too, have read the ‘highly sensational affair.’”

“Perhaps you can also tell me the name of the writer of that article?” smilingly returned the baron.

“I can—a reporter named Rahlou. I got the information just a few minutes ago from our official reporter. Since you are here, Herr Von Menken, allow me to give you a piece of advice. Keep a sharp watch on the papers left by Colonel Von Hackert. An attempt will likely be made to steal them from you. Since the night you purloined those documents from the colonel’s safe for a worthy purpose, the young lady’s enemies have been particularly industrious. As you know, I have interested myself in the matter, and have done what I could to aid you. I think I have made a discovery.”

“May I hear what it is?” inquired Menken. “You may trust me. I shall be prudent.”

“Of that I am certain, baron, and I shall not hesitate to keep you informed of our progress. We have discovered the writer of the anonymous letter we received after the so-called burglary at Colonel Von Hackert’s residence. You remember the letter asserted that valuable family documents had been stolen?”

“I remember. Evidently the writer is familiar with the secret of Fräulein Von Hackert’s birth.”

“That is very likely. The letter, as you know, was

brought here by a messenger, who told me his station was in front of the Hotel de Rome. He also told me that he thought the gentleman who had given him the letter lodged in the hotel, as he—the messenger—frequently saw him passing in and out there. We placed a policeman on watch near the messenger's station, and not long afterward the anonymous letter-writer was pointed out to him. He went at once to the porter of the hotel, presented a cigar-case (sacrificed for the purpose), and said that the gentleman who had just driven away in a cab had dropped it. He asked for the name and address of the owner of the cigar-case, as he wanted to claim a reward. He didn't receive a reward, but he did get the name of the mysterious stranger—"

"What's his name?" eagerly interrupted the baron.

Holgen turned over the leaves of a bulky folio.

"In a moment. Ah, here it is: 'Giulio Cadama, teacher of languages, from Rome, lodged, from the 16th of February to the 23d of March, in the Hotel de Rome. Afterward in furnished apartments in Dorothea Street, No. 287.'"

Herr Von Menken knit his brows perplexedly. Where had he heard that name? Ah, yes, now he remembered: Counselor Dreyfuss had told him that Frau Von Hilgersdorf was taking Italian lessons from a man named Cadama.

"I have had this *signor* watched for several weeks," continued the commissioner. "There is nothing about his conduct to rouse suspicion—at least not in the mind of a police-officer," he interpolated smilingly. "He is frequently seen in company with Herr Rahlou, whose name is well known to us, consequently we may easily guess the source of the article in to-day's paper. I believe the Italian to be a dangerous fellow; but we can do nothing with him, nor with the reporter, so long as

they do not trespass against the law. If I can serve you in any other way, my dear baron, I hope you will command me, for I am deeply interested in the young lady whose cause you have espoused. By the way, any news of the scarf-pin you lost the night you took the papers from the colonel's safe? It was a pearl held by a golden talon, I believe?"

"Yes. No, I have heard nothing of it, and that is rather comforting. I may have lost it elsewhere; if I did, I need not fear being accused of 'burglary.' But I am taking up too much of your time, Her Von Holgen. I am greatly indebted to you. Let me assure you again that you may trust me implicitly. Will you send me word when you hear anything that would interest me?"

The commissioner promised to do so, and Menken took leave. He walked back to his cart and drove to Waldau's apartments. The artist had arrived that morning, and was already busy tacking his sketches on the walls of the studio.

The baron was too cute an observer not to notice immediately the alteration in his young friend's manner. He had never seen Elimar so earnest, and yet so cheerfully active. The two men were soon seated on the lounge, underneath a wall-decoration of shields, spears and East Indian implements of war; and Elimar began at once to pour out his heart to his friend. He told everything. His walk with Lucia, his confession of love to her, her rejection of his suit.

The farther he proceeded in his recital the deeper became the lines about Baron Menken's stern mouth—the more serious became his expressive face. The heart of the elder man beat rapidly as he listened to the passionate words. It was oppressed by the weight of a terrible pain.

When Elimar had concluded, the baron, whose face had grown perceptibly paler, rose and laid his muscular white hand on the young man's shoulder.

"I have always avoided discussing the subject of love with you, Elimar," he said, quietly, "because I fancied that the flame which had been kindled in your heart would soon burn out. I did not believe that you loved Lucia with all the strength of your noble nature, therefore I sought to suppress what I believed an ephemeral passion. I see now that I was mistaken, and I ask your pardon. Every one is liable to err. I shall try to retrieve my error. You are not angry, are you, Elimar?"

Elimar sprang to his feet and caught the baron's hand in both his own.

"No—no, indeed, Attokar! How could I be angry with you, my best, my unselfish friend? If you were deceived in me, I alone am to blame for it. Lucia is right. I have not been the man I was born to become. And you were right in thinking Lucia too good for the indolent, ambitionless idler. But I intend to lead a different life, Menken, a life that will justify me in asking again for the dear girl's love."

"You talk like a brave man, my boy," responded the baron. "Let your acts be commensurate to your words, and you will not have to wait long for your reward. I believe now that you love Lucia truly and with a lasting passion, consequently it is my duty to trust you with a secret that concerns her. You must keep the secret from her, Elimar, and help me to defend her from the enemies who surround her on every side."

"Enemies? Lucia?" in astonishment exclaimed Waldau, his eyes flaming. "What can you mean, Attokar? Who are these enemies?"

Susanne's entrance interrupted him. Herr Von

Hackert had called to welcome Herr Waldau back to Berlin.

"Chance, my dear Elimar, answers your question," said Menken. "I have warned you before against this dissolute student, for he belongs to those who hate Lucia, and would rejoice to see her torn from her proud position and cast into the dust. However," he added hurriedly, "receive him as usual, for he must not guess that we suspect him."

Waldau had seen very little of Herbert Von Hackert—had, indeed, avoided him as much as it was possible. What, then, was the cause of the student's sudden friendliness?

Menken at once guessed the cause. He had for some time been closely observing this scion of an ancient and noble race, and lately had become convinced that Hackert was one of the chief plotters in the intrigue against Lucia. He remembered also that Signor Cadama had been introduced by Hackert to Frau Von Hilgersdorf.

Waldau's reception of his visitor was cold, if courteous.

The loquacious student at once began a stream of small talk. He had heard from "some one" that Waldau had seen the Dorings in Switzerland. How were they getting on? He had always liked Doring, and was delighted to hear of his success as an engineer. Was there any truth in the rumor that Doring's life had been saved by a mere lad? What was the brave little fellow's name? Ah, yes, Francisco Pedretti! Wasn't it strange that this Italian lad should resemble his cousin Lucia? By the way, how was Lucia? Did she intend to spend the summer in Switzerland? And did old Sporken still go about looking like a silver-ash, all in gray?

At last, wearied beyond endurance, Elimar abruptly cut short the stream of questions. He asked to be ex-

cused, as he was very tired, and still had much to do before evening, and amid a flood of parting words the student took his departure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Late that evening Baron Menken was returning home from a reception at the house of a friend who lived near the zoological garden. The road along the canal at that hour was always deserted and frequently had been the scene of assault and robbery.

Janisch, who was seated on the box beside the coachman, heard, above the noise of the swiftly rolling carriage, a sudden cry that seemed to come from the shrubbery along the bank of the stream. The old valet knew his master's habits too well to continue on the homeward way when a fellow-being might need their assistance. He bade the coachman stop, sprang from the box, and opened the carriage door.

"What is the matter? Why do we stop here?" sleepily queried the baron, sitting upright.

"I heard a cry for help, baron, and think some one is in danger over yonder by the water," replied Janisch.

Before he had concluded the baron was out of the carriage, alert and ready for action.

"Have you your club, Janisch?" he asked.

The old man nodded affirmatively. He always carried the formidable weapon when he went out nights with his master.

Menken took the coachman's whip; and grasping it so that the heavy silver ball on the handle might serve as a club, he stepped cautiously, followed by Janisch, toward the canal.

On the grassy slope of the embankment two men were industriously rifling the pockets of a third, whom they had evidently knocked down, and who was apparently unconscious. The robbers had torn off

their victim's coat, and were so absorbed in their search for plunder, that they had not heard the baron's carriage, but when the shrubbery near them rustled, and two dark forms emerged from it and came swiftly forward, the rogues forgot their victim, dropped his coat and ran hastily down the embankment and were lost in the darkness. Janisch was about to examine the injured man when the baron interposed.

"We will carry him at once to the carriage and take him home with us," he said. "Evidently he has been badly hurt, and I smell chloroform, too! The rascals knocked him on the head when he called for help, and, not satisfied with that, chloroformed him. Now," carefully, "what are you waiting for?" he demanded, as Janisch held back reluctantly.

"Hadn't we better take him to the nearest police-station instead of—"

"Don't be so stupid, Janisch!" impatiently interrupted his master. "Thirty years in my service and don't know me yet! Were we to cart this poor devil to the station he would be laid on a wooden bench until he recovered—or died! Nobody would take the trouble at this hour to look after his wounds. Come along! We'll take him home, and you will fetch Doctor Nobbser, who will get up at any hour—even if he is ill himself—to attend a suffering human being."

"I only meant, baron, that this man looks as much of a rogue as the two knaves who robbed him. Just look at him, baron; he—"

"Stop chattering and lend a hand!" again interrupted the baron, and the peremptory order was obeyed without further hesitation.

The injured man was taken to Baron Menken's apartments, where he was carefully undressed and laid on an improvised couch. The baron, with his own hands,

applied wet cloths to the wounded head. Then he went into the adjoining room to await the coming of the doctor.

On the floor lay a letter-case that had evidently fallen from the injured man's clothes. Menken carelessly picked it up, but his carelessness vanished when he read the name "Giulio Cadama" in silver letters on the dark-leather binding.

Was this the hand of fate?

Menken's heart beat loudly as he opened the letter-case. Naturally he asked himself if he were not doing wrong to pry into a stranger's secrets; but was not this stranger an enemy? Might not this letter-case, which chance had thrown into his hand, contain that which could destroy the being who was dearer than life to him?

"Menken stepped to the door of the room, in which lay the Italian still unconscious, and softly bolted it. Now he was safe from interruption! A number of papers fell from the letter-case when Menken opened it. With feverish haste he unfolded one after another. There were several due-bills bearing Herbert von Hackert's signature; also a letter from the student, which convinced Menken of the young man's evil intentions toward Lucia. There was a tiny missive addressed to "Brutus Cassius," and containing only three words:

"I await you."

And— But what did this mean? How came this old letter, written years ago by General Von Hilgersdorf, in Cadama's pocket? What was the meaning of the red marks underneath some of the words and the blue circles drawn around many of the letters?

More and more interested the baron continued his

examination. He unfolded a large document and found the answer to his questions. The sheet contained more of General Von Hilgersdorf's writing; but a practiced eye would have detected that it was a forgery. There were several slips of paper which bore evidences of the counterfeiter's patient and industrious labor.

The context of the forged document horrified and enraged Menken to such a degree, that he was obliged to summon all his self-command to keep himself from rushing into the next room and severely punishing the man he had rescued from the murderous footpads. His blood boiled as he read :

"Given on the seventeenth day of March, in the year 1859, in B——, Canton Tessin, in the presence of Giulio Cadama, attorney from Rome.

"I, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge, and declare in the presence of the above mentioned witness, that the infant daughter, born to Baron Karl von Hackert-Selchern and Anna Maria (*née* Von Wollwitz), his wife, died an hour after her birth. I declare further, that the dead infant was exchanged for the living infant daughter (born on the same day as the Hackert-Selchern infant) of Carmella Boccani, *vivandière* in Garibaldi's army; and that, with the consent of said Carmella Boccani, her daughter was to be reared as the child of Baron Karl von Hackert-Selchern and his wife Anna Maria.

"I swear to the above stated fact, as I was a witness to the exchange of infants.

[Signed] "BODO VON HILGERSDORF."

Baron Menken clenched his hand and drew a long breath. How should he act? What should he do to defend the helpless orphan against such an enemy? Should he retain possession of the letter-case with its compromising documents? Would not that be the proper weapon to use against yonder unconscious scoundrel? Cadama would believe that the thieves had taken the letter-case.

A sound in the adjoining room concluded Menken's deliberations. He hastily thrust the letter-case into

a drawer, which he locked, then went out into the next room.

The injured man's eyes were now wide open, and wandering perplexedly about the room.

"Where am I?" he asked in a voice that had not yet regained its strength.

"Calm yourself, *signor*," said Menken, stepping to the bedside, and forcing himself to speak calmly. "You have been assaulted by thieves. Chance led me to your assistance. I brought you here and sent for a doctor."

"A doctor?" repeated Cadama, his tones growing stronger. "What for? Because of this scratch? *Diavolo!* That is unnecessary. Take me to my own apartments—that would be more to the purpose! *Per bacco!* Those rascally bandits make me think myself back in my blessed Italia! But, who are you?" he asked suddenly, resting his glance on the tall form by the bedside.

"Baron Menken," was the reply.

"Ah, Herr Von Menken? How very singular! I have heard often of you. Baron, my name is Cadama. I am a teacher of Italian, and have several scholars who are acquaintances of yours. *Maledetto!* This wound pains horribly."

He closed his eyes, but opened them again quickly and looked anxiously toward his clothes, which were lying on a chair near the bed.

"Did those rogues clean out everything?" he asked eagerly. "Baron, may I ask you to hand me the waist-coat? Not the coat—the waist-coat, the waist-coat," he repeated with feverish impatience.

He snatched the garment from Menken's hand, felt in the inside-pocket, then gave utterance to a savage oath.

"Curse the villains! The damnable scoundrels!" he muttered under his breath. "Beg pardon, baron, but they have taken what was more valuable than money. Papers—papers of inestimable value to me. Help me, baron, advise me! How shall I get back my valuable papers?"

Menken sought to console him. The police would have to be informed, a description of the two robbers furnished, and the papers would doubtless be returned.

This advice, however, seemed to augment rather than allay the injured man's excitement. He tore the bandages from his head, sprang out of bed, tremblingly examined every one of his pockets, then fell fainting to the floor.

Fortunately, the doctor at those moment arrived. He examined the injured man, and pronounced the wound harmless if the patient could be kept quiet. Cadama, therefore, remained the baron's guest until the morning, when he was taken to his own lodgings in the baron's carriage.

Shortly after the departure of the uninvited guest, Menken repaired to Commissioner Von Holgen's office, when he related the occurrence of the past night and exhibited Cadama's letter-case, with the forged document.

Herr Von Holgen smiled as usual.

"A valuable find, indeed, my dear baron!" he exclaimed. "You are a born detective! It was an excellent idea to retain the letter-case. Although the contents do not warrant an immediate arrest of the Italian forger, we are collecting valuable evidence, which will in the end accomplish our purpose. I shall have these papers photographed, then return them and the letter-case to the owner—"

"Return them?" repeated Menken, disapprovingly.  
"Return these important documents?"

"Certainly," nodded Herr Von Holgen. "We must do nothing to make this worthy Southern shy of us, but allow him to retain his feeling of perfect security. Permit me, my dear baron, to conduct this case. Cadama shall have his letter-case, not directly from my hands—that would make him wary—but in a way that will never make him suspect that we have seen it. A circuitous route often leads to the desired goal in criminal matters as well as in politics."

\* \* \* \* \*

That same day Signor Cadama received, by mail, his letter-case, wrapped in coarse brown paper. Nothing was missing from it, but in it was found a soiled scrap of paper, on which was scrawled the following:

"When next you promenade alone at night have the goodness to carry in your pockets something besides worthless due-bills and old letters. By so doing you will oblige your two friends of last night."





## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE CAMPAGNOLE.

The summer months were drawing to a close. Already the foliage on tree and shrub began to show autumnal hues ; while the ardor of the sun became less oppressive as the days waned, and the breeze indicated, by its refreshing coolness, the approaching change of seasons.

With the waning of the summer, society at the Residenz took on new life. The various resorts in mountain and at the seashore became deserted ; country-houses and rural villas were closed, their occupants having returned to the capital and its social gayeties.

Among the birds of passage returning homeward was Counselor Dreyfuss and his party. Herr Dreyfuss was perfectly satisfied with the results of his summer journeying. Not only was his health greatly improved—his full-moon face was rosier than ever, his double chin more prominent, while his white waistcoat described a semicircle that was broken nowhere in its faultless curve by a single wrinkle—but his mind and heart were again at rest. The physician who had worked such

wonders was Frau Annie Doring, whose "diplomatic artfulness" had effected a reconciliation between her husband and her uncle, their mutual resentment and past differences having been drowned in a bowl of champagne the evening Doring arrived at Brunnen.

If the counselor was content and happy, then we may say, without exaggerating, that his wife was in a state of beatitude—even though Doring had firmly refused her appeal that he would at once quit the snowy region of the St. Gothard, with all its fearful dangers, and at once return with Annie to Berlin.

Another member had been added to the counselor's household. Francisco, the Italian youth, who had accompanied Lieutenant Doring to Brunnen. The lad's shy, yet cheerful and active manner had so won the old counselor, that he offered him a place in his service. The young *campagnole* accepted the offer, and he now wore the Dreyfuss livery—dark blue, with silver buttons stamped with the monogram A. D.—which was very becoming to his dusky beauty.

Francisco Pedretti—so he called himself, and thus he was registered in his passport—was boyish in looks and manner. According to his own story he had had a sorrowful childhood. His father had been a worthless fellow, the evil star of his beloved mother, who had had a hard struggle for existence. Both parents were dead, and had left him helpless. There were few trades he had not tried in order to gain a livelihood. He had tended goats on the verdant pastures of the *campagna*, had posed as a model for the artists who sought subjects on the Scala de Spagna. He had acted as guide to tourists who wished to explore the Eternal City; he had blacked boots mornings, sold oranges at noon, and distributed theater programmes evenings. He had been a *figurant* in the *ballet*, a lamp-lighter, color-

grinder, seller of amulets, jockey, peddler and street musician. In fact, there was but one of the many trades practiced on the seven hills of Rome he had not stooped to learn—that of begging. No, he had had too much pride for that. His mother had told him that her ancestors had once been rich and honorable patri-cians of the Tiber City. And could the descendant of such a race stoop to beg? To clean lamps in the Teatro della Valle, to grind colors in an artist's *atelier*—that was no disgrace; but to beg, with healthy body and limbs—*pfui!*—that was dishonorable.

Thus the youthful Francisco had managed to eke out an existence, until a wealthy patron secured work for him in the Gothard Tunnel. How he came to be with Lieutenant Doring we know. The lieutenant, who was very much attached to the brave lad, was glad to have him enter the counselor's service, where he would be sure to have a comfortable home.

Francisco had another sincere friend in Lucia von Hackert. At first the young girl had found the lad's strange resemblance to her awkward and unpleasant; but later, when she learned what a brave, good-humored and tender-hearted youth he was, she began to take an interest in him. She had been deeply touched by his grief over a dead bird, and fancied that his heart must be weighted by a secret sorrow because she had seen him, from her window one moonlight night, lying on the grass, with his tearful eyes fixed on the sky and his lips moving as if in prayer.

Perhaps Francisco guessed the young lady's sympathy for himself, which was betrayed by her kind words and treatment. He seemed to treasure her every word; he obeyed her slightest wish; and once, when she casually remarked that she had never seen a genuine *edelweiss* blossom, Francisco appeared the next

morning with a nosegay of the snowy flowers. He had climbed the mountain before daylight in order to procure them for her.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the first day of the autumn races, and Counselor Dreyfuss drove with his wife and Lucia von Hackert and her *chaperon* to the Hoppegarten to view the sport. Herr Dreyfuss was particularly interested in a new horse of Baron Von Menken's that was to make its first appearance as a racer on the track to-day. All the sporting world pronounced Tollkopf, the baron's new horse, a magnificent animal; all sinew and muscle; one that could go like the wind, and to-day was to decide whether this reputation was deserved. Lieutenant Von Wedell, whom the counselor had met on the street the day before, doubted it, and thought Tollkopf's capabilities exaggerated. Whereupon Dreyfuss had offered to wager that the horse would outstrip everything else on the track. The wager had been promptly accepted.

When the Dreyfuss equipage arrived on the track, the opening race was already finished. The victorious jockey, swinging his cap in the air, the perspiration streaming over his crimson face, swung past to the music of applauding voices and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

"We are just in time," exclaimed the counselor, his round face beaming with delight. He took his field-glass from its case, which hung by a strap over his shoulder, and looked carefully about him. A sea of brilliant colors stretched before him. The track was clear, with the exception of two grooms who were repairing a slight break in the boundary pickets. The crowd at the starting place was composed of uniformed jockeys, the owners of the horses, judges, trainers and

grooms. On either side of the starting-place rose tier upon tier of seats for the spectators, flanked by a seemingly interminable barricade of vehicles, horsemen and persons on foot.

That was a tumult, a hub-bub, a hurly-burly ! All classes were represented on this common ground. Everybody from a royal prince down to the worthy butcher who, with "mother and the children," had rattled up in his meat cart to see the "capers of Mucius Scavola."

Here, too, were assembled, those questionable personages who are never absent from the scene where the chase after gold may be pursued. Here were haughty dames in silks and laces, and gallant squires on horseback and on foot, and mingling among them all, were the perambulating restaurants, programme-sellers, flower-girls and a hundred others for whom the race-track is a place of profit and trade.

"There's Menken ! And there's Waldau, too, riding the baron's Hinkepinke !" cried Dreyfuss, waving his handkerchief to attract the attention of the two horsemen.

Menken had already descried the counselor's carriage by reason of the dusky-skinned lad who, clad in his becoming livery, sat stiffly upright on the box beside the coachman, and who, since the counselor's return from Switzerland, had been the subject of the keenest observation from the baron.

The gentlemen lifted their hats when they were come within speaking distance of the carriage, a by no means easy task in that crowd.

"Hail to you, baron," shouted the counselor. "And to you, Apollo's heir ! Have you entered for the hurdles, Waldau, that you are seated so proudly on Menken's steeple-chaser ? You sit your steed like a centaur !"

"Thanks for the compliment, counselor," smilingly responded Elimar. "I think, however, that the credit for my seat belongs more to Hinkepinke than to me. Menken insisted on my accompanying him on horseback, and as I served my time in a cavalry corps I thought I might venture."

"Do you intend to ride Tollkopf yourself, Herr Von Menken?" asked Frau Dreyfuss.

"I? With all this *embonpoint*?" ejaculated the baron. "My dear madam, you are mocking me. Wait until you see my trainer, my brave Thompson. I believe I weigh six times as much as he does."

Frau Therese hadn't the least idea what sort of a being a "trainer" might be, but she nodded understandingly, nevertheless. She admired Herr Von Menken, and liked to engage him in conversation.

"That is a man," she was wont to observe, "to whom one can talk about the important mysteries of the kitchen."

Waldau, meanwhile, bent toward Lucia, and said :

"May I inquire after your health, gracious miss?"

The young girl smiled, and lifted her dark eyes frankly to his face.

"Thanks," she responded. "I am very well. Allow me in turn to inquire how your picture is getting on—I mean the one you intend for the exhibition this winter?"

"It is finished," replied the artist, and there was a touch of pride in the tone.

"Finished?" in surprise echoed Lucia. "Already finished? How very industrious you have been! It was not yet half-finished when you were at Brunnen—"

She paused abruptly, while a rosy flush suffused her face.

Elimar noticed her confusion, and his heart beat more quickly.

"I must have imbibed new life and energy in that delightful mountain region. At least, I feel as if I had become a different being," he returned, in a low tone.

"For which of the races have you entered Tollkopf, Herr Von Menken?" asked the counselor, who was studying his programme.

"For number six," was the reply.

"Ah, yes ; here it is : 'Tollkopf ; three-year-old, by Menelaus, out of Aunt Pitty.' Um ! Only three years old ? Well, my dear baron, if he wins to-day I'll congratulate you, for he will be good for a half-dozen years more. By the way, won't you have a glass of port—Cliquot—Blanqueville?" Before the baron could reply, Herr Dreyfuss turned toward Francisco and added : "Jump down, my boy, and get the wine-basket."

Francisco slipped from his seat and stepped to the rear of the carriage, where he was about to unlock the receptacle underneath the back-seat, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear :

"Attention !"

Then he felt a piece of paper thrust into his palm.

A short distance from the counselor's carriage was a hired conveyance, in which sat Herbert von Hackert and Signor Cadama. Near them stood Assessor Pringsberg and Herr Blenkner, chatting.

Cadama resumed his seat by the student, which he had quitted for a moment, and said in a low tone :

"I gave him the note. The boy must find a way to come to see me, at least three times a week, for instructions."

"I don't think he will have any difficulty in getting an hour or two occasionally. Dreyfuss seems a kind-hearted old fellow," observed Hackert. "All I am

afraid of is that the yougster may become rebellious. I don't altogether trust his dusky phiz !"

"Nor do I," muttered Cadama under his breath. Aloud, he added: "Francisco is a peculiar lad, and rather hard to manage. However, he is quite submissive toward me, and he knows that it is to his advantage to obey me. I don't think you need have any fear concerning him, as—"

"I say, Hackert," here interrupted Pringsberg's voice, "are you betting on Kolkraban? You will persist that the beast can't be beaten. We want to bet that she will be the last to reach the goal."

"Done! I'll take your bet," called Hackert. "Fifty marks, if you wish."

Cadama laid his hand on the student's arm.

"Isn't that Rahlou over yonder," he asked. "*Diavolo!* Rahlou on horseback!"

A loud laugh burst from Hackert's lips:

"Don Quixote, as I live! Don Quixote himself!" he exclaimed. "Rahlou must be crazy to show himself on such a nag! Where in the world did he get her? Ho, doctor! Rahlou!" he called in a loud voice. "Come over here!"

The reporter, with difficulty, urged his Rosinante through the dense crowd. He certainly looked irresistibly comical. The long-legged, bony steed, with her crooked withers and crane-neck, would have made an excellent specimen for veterinary students. Rahlou himself clung nervously to the saddle; but with an air which left no one in doubt as to his own appearance of his horsemanship. A gray "chimney-pot" hat was balanced on his carefully curled locks; brick-dust colored gloves covered his hands, which held the reins on a level with his breast. The stirrups were so short that his knees described acute angles.

"Don't come too near, my dear Rahlou," called the student, as Rahlou approached the wagonette. "You might spoil my new coat! Tell me, in heaven's name, where did you get that hideous crib-biter?"

Rahlou's face darkened. He leaned forward and stroked his horse's neck:

"I am not rich enough to buy a blooded steed, Herr Von Hackert," he returned, with a dignified air. "If you don't like my mount, you—"

"Nonsense," laughingly interposed the student. "Can't you take a bit of fun? Then—don't come any nearer, please; Rosinante is inclined to be too familiar. Have you written that article?"

"I have, and am awaiting the order to publish it."

"You will probably receive it to-day."

"The earlier the better, baron. You will enjoy the 'skit.' It is transparent without being gross, piquant without trespassing on decency. In short, it's a model of its kind."

"You have heard, I dare say, what has been said about self-praise?" returned Hackert. "But your vanity will be condoned if the article in question is what you describe it. Frau Von Hilgersdorf returns home to-morrow or next day. We shall then be prepared to resume operations."

"A word with you, my dear Rahlou," here whispered Blenkner in the reporter's ear which was furthest from the student. "Waldau's large picture, which he has named '*Kerkerwonne*,' is finished, and is to be hung at Gurlitt's before the opening of the exhibition. I have seen the thing—a most execrable daub! I hope you won't forget to give it the sort of notice it deserves?"

A meaning smile wreathed the reporter's lips.

"Never fear, my dear Blenkner," he returned. "After my criticism of the '*Kerkerwonne*,' its creator

will be dead—dead as dust to the art-world. I am not the art-reviewer on our journal, but I fancy I may for once take up that writer's pen. Perhaps Herr Waldau, when he reads my review, will remember a certain hour at the Café Bauer !”

The signal for the next race was given. As the starter's flag fell, the horses shot over the track, Menken's three-year-old close on the heels of the one in the lead. The jockey who rode him wore white and blue. Lucia was the first to notice it, for they were her favorite colors.

Herr Dreyfuss stood up in his carriage. He held his glass to his eyes, and closely followed the horses, accompanying every turn with ejaculatory remarks :

“Incredible ! Tollkopf is third—his jockey is holding him in for the finish. Now, Count Bilberg's Teremtito has the lead. No—yes—no, Tollkopf is forging to the front. Lucia ! Therese ! Frau Von Sporken, just look how that beast flings his hoofs ! *Hei !* He's going like the wind. There, *hopsa !* over the hurdle !—over the ditch !—*hopsa !*—down goes Oelsky's filly ! Now she's up again ! Bravo—bravo ! over the wall ! *hei*—how Tollkopf is snorting ! Forward, forward, old boy ! Teremtito is close on your heels. Who's that limping in the rear ? Oechelheim's Kolkrable ? Yes, it is—he's out. Now to the finish, lads ! Who's ahead now ? Teremtito—yes—no—there comes Tollkopf ! Heavens, how that brute flies ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !! Hurrah !!! He's ahead—he has won !”

Perfectly exhausted, the counselor sank down on the cushions, while the crowd shouted vociferously :

“Hurrah for Tollkopf ! Hurrah for Tollkopf !”

Even Frau Therese added her weak plaudits to the universal acclamation. Lucia alone sat silent in her

corner and surveyed, without a trace of interest on her calm face, the turmoil over Menken's triumph.

"The baron, who was the hero of the day, would gladly have exchanged all the glory of his horse's triumph, the handsome prize and all the sincere and insincere congratulations for a single friendly smile from a pair of silent red lips and a sympathetic glance from two sparkling black eyes.

Later, Menken and Elimar Waldau were riding slowly homeward along the dusty street when the Dreyfuss carriage passed them. Mutual greetings were exchanged. Francisco, following his master's suit, removed the blue cap from his curly head.

"I don't know what to think of that lad," observed Menken, looking after the carriage. "Either he is a finished hypocrite and thorough knave in spite of his youth, or else he is as innocent and guileless as a cherub!"

"I am inclined to believe the latter," responded Waldau. "I can't believe that two beings so closely connected by blood could be so different in character. Dreyfuss is full of praise of the boy's honesty and fidelity; and I must confess that I have become very much attached to the little fellow."

Menken adjusted his hat more securely on his head, then observed moodily :

"I can't see my way clear out of this labyrinth. If I had not in my possession the letters written by Francisco to extort money from Colonel Hackert, I should not think of doubting the lad, however much other circumstances might militate against his apparent honesty. Until convinced that he is innocent, we must hold to the facts which show him to be in league with that rascally Italian Cadama. It would be an easy matter to summon the lad before a police justice and question

him concerning his assumed name. His calling himself 'Pedretti' certainly warrants such a course ; but I don't care to resort to that step just yet. The most disagreeable part of the whole complicated affair is that the police cannot act as energetically and promptly as we should like, because the law has not yet been trespassed. Not even Cadama's forgery of Hilgersdorf's writing comes within punishable limits, because the document has not been used to defraud or injure any one. We must wait. But, by heaven, waiting never was so difficult as it is now !"

Elimar drew a long breath before responding.

"Yes, waiting is a hard task. My days pass quickly enough, for I have my work to take up my attention. But nights, when I can't paint, all sorts of thoughts and fears trouble me. I am overwhelmed by the fear of how much Lucia must suffer when she learns the secret of her birth. I don't care that she is the daughter of a beggar. I should adore her were she herself a beggar ! Oh, how she will suffer when she learns that she is not the daughter of the man whom she loved and revered above every being on earth ! How she will suffer when she learns that it was her own brother who aided to tear her from all the happy illusions of her girlhood !"

The baron nodded thoughtfully, and after a moment's silence, said :

"I have been for some time considering the possibility of winning Francisco to our side. We may be mistaken in the lad's character ; he seems amiable and yielding, and being easily influenced, may have been persuaded by Cadama to become Lucia's traducer. Could we win the lad's allegiance, by *golden* means if necessary, we might be able to learn the Italian's plans. That would be a considerable step forward, for Cadama

seems to me to have intentions ulterior to those which will transform the dissolute student into a millionaire. To-day, while Tollkopf was racing to victory, an idea occurred to me. Dreyfuss told me a few days ago that Francisco had once been a jockey, and to quite a 'swagger' sporting man, the Marchese Filippo Serena. Well, old Thompson has become so infirm that I fear to-day's triumph will be his last effort on the track, what do you say to my engaging Francisco as my jockey?"

"A capital idea. But will Dreyfuss consent to Francisco's leaving him?"

"The counselor is indebted to me for his latest honor, the order of the 'Red Eagle,' which fact will, I fancy, operate favorably in my behalf. As for Francisco, I hope to arouse in him a passion for riding. He who has once ridden to victory on the race-course—and the little *campagnole* rode Serena's Mandolinata to the winning goal—for him the saddle is a throne of roses! I may be mistaken, but there is no harm in—"

He broke off suddenly as the wagonette containing Herbert von Hackert and Signor Cadama bowed past them. The occupants of the two vehicles saluted, the *avvocato* bowing with extreme deference when he recognized his preserver.

"The inseparables!" sneered Hackert. "I dislike those two fellows, one is a sneak and intriguer, the other a hypocrite and police spy—"

"Police spy?" echoed Cadama. "Surely you can't mean Baron Von Menken?"

"I just do mean Baron Von Menken—he is a spy in the service of the police—a ferret—a listener!"

"Baron Von Menken?" incredulously repeated the Italian, a sudden fear seizing him.

"I can't prove it, of course," resumed the student. "But I suspect—nay, I am sure of it. Did you notice

that tall, blonde-haired man who saluted Menken so cordially after the race? That is our most celebrated criminalist—a very devil of cunning, a person feared and dreaded by every one who has cause to fear. His name is Von Holgen.”

“*Diavolo!*” ejaculated Cadama. “Was that Commissioner Von Holgen? Why have you not told me before that he and Baron Von Menken are friends?”

“Because it never occurred to me as necessary you should know,” rather insolently retorted Hackert.

Cadama stared thoughtfully at his gloved hands for several moments in silence, then said :

“All sorts of thoughts come to me, and some of them are not exactly comforting. According to your story, Baron Von Menken was your uncle’s most intimate friend. He it was who was in the colonel’s apartments the night the safe was broken open. Beyond a doubt the safe contained papers relating to the exchange of infants.” Cadama gazed at the student through his half-closed lids before adding : “Doesn’t it look as if Menken—to whom the colonel may have confided the secret of Lucia’s birth—had purloined those papers?”

Hackert shook his head negatively.

“I don’t think so. Are you led to draw this conclusion from the friendship between Menken and the commissioner?” he asked.

“I am. If Menken, whom you call a police-spy, had not, through his intimacy with Von Holgen, understood how to conduct the matter, the mystery of the so-called burglary would have been solved ere this.”

“Then you really believe that Menken stole those papers, and that the police know it?”

“I don’t think it impossible.”

“The clever rogue is capable of anything. We must keep a close watch on him.”

"That is the last thing we must do," returned Cadama. "We must find out if he has the documents, and if he has, steal them from him."

"Capital! You are a shrewd chap, Cadama. I should like to hear how you are going to manage it?"

"With Francisco's help, most likely. I shall have to think over the matter."

"Suppose the baron has no telltale documents?" after a moment's pause suggested the student.

"Then General Von Hilgersdorf's papers will be of greater use to us," briefly responded Cadama.

A few minutes later they arrived at the Potsdam gate, where Hackert alighted, and betook himself to a wine-shop, where he might drown his disappointment at losing the wager he had made with Assessor Pringsburg.

Cadama drove to his lodgings, where he flung himself on the sofa. He was out of humor. Matters were not adjusting themselves as he had hoped and expected. He encountered on every side unforeseen difficulties and hindrances.

He had lain thus for perhaps an hour or less, when a hesitating knock at the door interrupted his meditations.

In reply to his "Enter!" Francisco opened the door.

"You desired to speak to me, *signor*; I am here," he said in his native tongue, as he crossed the threshold with evident reluctance.

The attorney, who had not risen from his sofa, pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, my son, and answer a few questions. I dare say you have not forgotten the robbery which was committed in the Palazzo Borghese about a year ago?"

The little *campagnole* trembled.

"No, *signor*, I have not forgotten," he replied, in a low voice.

"Give me the names of the thieves who stole from the coin-cabinet the rarest and most valuable specimens it contained.

The perspiration started to the brow of the tortured lad. That it cost him a severe struggle to reply was evident.

"Achillo Bonzano, Pietro Cortes, Oreste Chiavoni and—"

"Well—and?" demanded Cadama, fixing his pitiless eyes on the hesitating lad.

"And myself," concluded Francisco, with a sigh that sounded like a sob. His face was flushed with deep crimson, his eyes were cast on the floor.

"Yes, Francisco Boccani was the last name in the list of the cunning thieves," continued the attorney. "You would have been sentenced to prison for many years had I not interposed and saved you from such degradation. Had I not used my powerful influence in your behalf, my boy, you would now be plucking wool in the prison halls of Caserta, or dragging a ball and chain on the walls of Arcona. I stretched out my hand to save you that the name of your honest mother might not be branded with your infamy."

"My mother—my poor mother!" sobbed Francisco, burying his face in his hands. From between the brown fingers, work-hardened, yet slender and shapely, ran bright tears which dropped on the dark-blue cloth of his livery. His chest rose and fell under the convulsive sobs which rent his slim frame.

Without pity—nay, with a certain triumph, Cadama watched his youthful countryman. It would not be difficult to govern this weak-hearted lad.

"I don't want to grieve you unnecessarily, my dear child," resumed the attorney, in a fatherly tone; "but I am forced to remind you that your fate, your future

is in my hands, that you owe gratitude to me alone that I alone am able to shield you from punishment. It would go hard with you were I to go before a Roman tribunal, and, holding in my right hand five gold coins, say : ' Here are the long-lost coins, and the name of the thief who stole them is—' "

Francisco's hot hand was suddenly laid against the cruel lips, and the boy's tones of anguish cried :

" Cease—cease, *signor*. For the love of heaven, cease ! I know what you would say. Ask of me what you will, I am ready to do your bidding."

" That is my brave boy ! That is the way I like to hear you talk !" approved the attorney. " Always remember, Francisco, that my cause is yours—that my interests are yours—"

" Ah !" with sudden fervor interrupted the lad, " how gladly would I renounce all my interests, *signor*, could I kneel but once at Lucia's feet and tell her that I, her brother, am working basely hand in hand with her enemies. Could I say to her but once : ' Beware, my dear sister ! ' "

" What sort of nonsense are you talking, boy ?" exclaimed Cadama, his face darkening. " Do you imagine that Lucia would be delighted to learn that she was sister to a common thief ? Sooner or later she will hear this agreeable fact ; but until that time, my boy, I trust you will keep the knowledge to yourself. Should you dare to disobey me I will certainly authorize your arrest by the police here. But, let us drop the subject. You recognize the cross-roads on which you stand—one leads to gold, the other to prison ! Are you acquainted with Baron Von Menken ?"

" Yes," scarcely above his breath, replied the lad, " the baron is a visitor at my master's house."

" Ah !" Cadama tranquilly prepared a cigarette

while speaking. "I want you to attend to what I say, Francisco, for of all the commissions you have performed for me, the one I am going to give you is the most important. You must manage somehow to enter Baron Von Menken's service—"

"Pardon, *signor*, for interrupting you," exclaimed the lad, the flush dying out of his face and leaving it pale; "but—but, would it not look strange were I to change situations so soon again?"

"It must be your part to avoid anything remarkable," sternly responded Cadama. "You are a clever lad, and will know how to accomplish what I desire. I know very well why you wish to remain with the counselor," he added in a significant tone; "but there are times when you must not be allowed to yield to the promptings of affection. I shall leave it to your cunning to find the shortest way into the baron's service."

"And what am I to do when I have accomplished it?" in a low tone questioned the lad.

"You will receive the necessary instructions at the proper time. I may want nothing more than a few papers which are in the baron's possession."

Francisco started and looked anxiously at the attorney.

"Am I—am I to *steal* them?" he gasped with pallid lips.

"Call it so if you will," coldly responded the *signor*.

Francisco sprang to his feet, drew his slender form to its full height, and fixing his dark eyes on the face of his tormentor, said in a tone that betrayed his excitement:

"I am in your power, Signor Cadama, but your authority over me is at an end. An unlucky chance made me an unwilling accessory to a crime, and made you acquainted with the fact, since which time you

have not ceased persecuting me. To escape a degrading punishment I became your tool ; at your dictation I wrote letters to extort money from a generous man ; at your command crushed every brotherly feeling out of my heart. But now, it is enough. I will not commit a theft in order that I may escape the threatened punishment for a crime I did not commit."

The *signor* had also risen from his sofa. He leaned with folded arms against the table, and with a malignant smile on his thin lips surveyed the excited lad for several moments before speaking.

"Your language, my good youth, is that of a stage hero," he said in a sneering tone. "One can see, quite plainly, that you have cleansed lamps in the Teatro della Valle. Dramatic pathos is wasted on me, boy ; moreover, it is useless for you to rebel against my authority. I repeat what I said before : You must enter Baron Von Menken's service. If you have not accomplished it before Christmas, a police escort will conduct you across the Swiss boundary to the Roman prison cell which is waiting for you. You may go now."

Without another word the lad turned and quitted the room. Cadama shook his fist after him and hissed :

"Have a care, insolent fellow !"

Outside the door Francisco halted an instant to lift his clenched hand threateningly and mutter through his closed teeth :

"Have a care, you merciless villain !"





## CHAPTER XVII.

HERR WYRENBURG.

Universal approbation was showered on Elimar Waldau's picture, which had been on exhibition for a fortnight in Gurlitt's art-salons. Its rather singular title, "*Kerkerwonne*," had aided somewhat in attracting the novelty-seeking throng; the subject, however, was anything but sensational. The idea was extremely simple. A young wife brings a pardon to the cell of her husband who is a political prisoner. The costumes are of the period of the Polish insurrection.

The enthusiastic admiration of the work made the severe criticism of it, which appeared in Herr Rahlou's journal, all the more noticeable. It was filled with fault-finding, and contained spite and malice in every line.

While those of Waldau's fellow-craftsmen who were friendly toward him shrugged their shoulders over the venomous review, and his enemies rubbed their hands in delight, the public, whose interest and curiosity had been augmented by the criticism, flocked in greater crowds to Gurlitt's to view the much-talked-of picture.

Of course Waldau had seen the criticism. It had been pointed out to him by "Still-Life" Eugene, of

whose work a laudatory notice appeared in the same paper.

"Its a nasty bit of spite !" exclaimed Blenkner, feigning great indignation. "A piece of unparalleled malice ! Rahlou ought to be ashamed of himself. I dare say it is his mode of avenging the slap in the face you gave him last winter ! But it is a base revenge. He might have kept his praises of my last 'still-life,' which has met with great success, by the way. I don't want them after his shabby treatment of you. My poor friend, what an unfortunate review it is for your exhibition picture ! I shouldn't be at all surprised if it would have an unfavorable effect upon the hanging committee ; indeed, they may exclude the picture altogether from the exhibition ! That would be dreadful !"

Elimar smiled. He was sufficiently acquainted with his colleague to know how to take this pretended sympathy.

"I may forestall the committee, and decide myself not to have the picture hung," he returned calmly. "I have had an offer for it."

"An offer ? Already !" ejaculated Blenkner. "Why, the picture has been at Gurlitt's only a few days."

"That is true, but the would-be purchaser has managed to find it, all the same. I have just received a note from Herr Gurlitt, who tells me that ten thousand marks have been offered for my '*Kerkerwonne*.' As that is almost twice as much as I intended asking for it, I should be a fool not to take it."

Blenkner almost staggered. What a lucky fellow was Waldau ! Ten thousand marks for a mere daub ! A sum that very few of the most celebrated painters could command for a work, offered to this young, unknown paint-waster ! It was enough to drive a man crazy !



WEDELL ALONE FOUND FAULT WITH HIM.—See Page 235.



Blenkner was a trifle paler than usual as he congratulated his fellow-artist.

"You deserve your good luck, old man," he observed, "and I congratulate you with all my heart."

He shook Waldau warmly by the hand, then betook himself at once to Rahlou's sanctum, where he gave vent to his astonishment and disgust at the "execrable taste for false art" of the general public.

Waldau had told the truth. A wealthy patron, whose name was unknown to him, had actually offered ten thousand marks for the "*Kerkerwonne*." The young artist did not hesitate to accept the liberal offer, but stipulated that the purchaser should allow the picture, in case it met the approval of the judges, to be hung for several days at the art exhibition.

It was Waldau's birthday, and a number of his friends and acquaintances were assembled in his rooms to celebrate the event. Among the company were Counselor Dreyfuss and Herr Von Menken. The majority of the guests were already known to the baron, who, however, was more interested in a stranger who had been introduced to him as Herr Wyrenberg.

It was not the celebrity of Herr Wyrenberg's name—he was a celebrated Viennese artist—which interested Menken; but it recalled the last hours of his friend, Colonel Von Hackert. Wyrenberg was the name of the artist who had been with Hackert and General Von Hilgersdorf, in the little Tessin hamlet which held the secret of Lucia's birth.

After the bountiful supper which old Susanne had prepared for her master's guests, Menken succeeded in drawing Herr Wyrenberg into a corner of the studio where they might converse without being disturbed.

"By the way, Herr Wyrenberg," carelessly observed the baron, after a few casual remarks had been ex-

changed, "I used to hear a dear friend, now deceased, speak of you. Do you remember Baron Von Hackert-Selchern?"

"Hackert-Selchern?" repeated the artist. "Yes, certainly he was a friend of Captain—afterward General Von Hilgersdorf. Yes, I remember; we three were together, in '59, in a little village in Licino. Hackert's wife died there. Yes, yes, I remember him quite distinctly now. Hilgersdorf and I had quite an adventure—if I may so call it—at that time. A pretty *vivandière*, who had once posed as model for me, gave birth to a child in the vine-dresser's cottage in which we also had lodgings. The poor woman was penniless, so we did what we could to help her financially. We met the little woman again later, when we were in camp on the battlefield, where she posed for me a second time for a picture I painted for Hilgersdorf. Ah, those were merry days, baron; and now—*mon Dieu!*—now I am old and gray!"

"Not yet too old to recall the days of your youth," smilingly supplemented Menken. "Hilgersdorf preceded Hackert to the grave. He was an original character."

"Yes; and a wild fellow when I first became acquainted with him," responded the artist. "He was a thorough soldier—perhaps that the only redeeming feature of his character, for cards, wine and women ruled him wholly—nothing else possessed any attraction for him. I think he entertained a sort of *penchant* for our little *protégée*, the pretty *vivandière*. Yes, he was a veritable Don Juan."

"I dare say he had become acquainted with the little camp beauty before she came to the vine-dresser's cottage?"

Menken hid his eagerness to hear the artist's reply

behind the burning match which he held to a fresh cigar.

"No—ah, no!" responded Herr Wyrenberg. "He saw her for the first time the day she was brought to the village. How well I remember the occasion! It was raining fearfully—a genuine Italian downpour—when the little cart stopped at the vine-dresser's cottage and Carmella—that was her name—alighted. Hilgersdorf, who was sitting with me in my room, fell in love at once with her pretty face; but any hopes he may have entertained were not realized, for the little Carmella was as reserved and haughty as a dame of high degree, and could look at one in a way that taught one to treat her with proper respect. Later, when I met her again in camp, I heard all about her character. She was a perfectly respectable, chaste and honest little woman."

Menken bent his face over his cup of fragrant Mocha. How glad he was to hear these words from the aged artist, who resumed after he had emptied his cup:

"I admired Herr Von Hackert very much. He was a charming companion—a gentleman from crown to sole! He, too, was very kind to Carmella in her hour of need. I can see him now as he looked the day he came to the cottage with the huge hamper of clothes, which his sick wife had sent to Carmella and her baby. Hackert's wife died in giving birth to a little daughter."

"Yes, so I heard," assented the baron. "I was not acquainted with the baroness, who was said to be a great beauty. If, as they say, her daughter resembles her, then she must, indeed, have been very beautiful."

Herr Wyrenberg took the *liqueur* glass of Chartreuse which a servant at that moment presented, then said:

"I was at Frau Von Hackert's funeral. It was the most impressive entombment I ever witnessed. The

baroness was a Roman Catholic, consequently her wish to be buried in the little Tessin graveyard was fulfilled without difficulty. Perhaps the enchanting spring day and the picturesque surroundings had much to do with the impressiveness of the ceremony, but I shall never forget it—never ! Just imagine an ancient, weather-beaten chapel with moss-grown belfry, lying deep in a peaceful valley ; all about it crumbling tombs shaded by cypress, laurel and olive-trees. Close by the wall which encloses the churchyard the murmuring Tessin, and beyond the snow-crowned mountains gleaming in the sunlight. Oh, I can assure you, baron, that the dead lady had willed wisely when she chose to be buried underneath the cypresses by the Tessin, instead of in our cold North, in one of the modern, shadeless cemeteries ! That was the landscape,” he went on, after a moment’s pause. “ Now for the figures : Herr Von Hackert and his friend, Hilgersdorf, who followed the bier, were in uniform—probably the first time the Prussian helmet had appeared on the banks of the russet-hued Ticino. The entire village—young and old—formed the procession which followed the coffins. I say coffins, because the *vivandière’s* baby, which had died shortly after its birth, was buried at the same time with the baroness. Side by side the two coffins were lowered into the earth—the aristocrat and the beggar—to slumber side by side underneath the same cypress, which, in the season of storm, would fling its dark-green leaves alike on the two graves. The village-school children sang a hymn ; then the aged priest delivered the funeral sermon. While he was speaking one of those sudden thunder-storms of the South came swiftly across the sky. The lightning flashed ; thunder reverberated through the valley, and threatening sulphur-hued clouds hung low over our heads ; but not a drop

of rain fell to interrupt the ceremony at the grave. It was solemnly beautiful. Hilgersdorf and I often talked about it afterward."

Menken, who had listened attentively to the artist's interesting recital, now asked :

"Were you and Hilgersdorf the only lodgers in the vine-dresser's cottage?"

"Yes. There would not have been room for a third.

When the little *vivandière* came one of us had to give up our room for her use. A man, you know, will suffer any inconvenience to please a pretty woman ! Herr Von Hackert and his wife occupied a villa at the end of the village."

"Are you sure there wasn't a third sojourner in the village?" questioned Menken. "I seem to remember hearing my friend Hackert speak of a young Roman attorney whom he met in Tessin, or somewhere in that neighborhood."

"Not in Tessin, certainly," confidently rejoined Herr Wyrenberg. "There were no strangers in the village but ourselves." He rose and added : "I want to take a look at some of our gifted young friend's work. Perhaps I may find something to take with me as a remembrance of him."

The evening passed pleasantly. Counselor Dreyfuss was, as usual when Frau Therese's reproachful eyes were not on him, the life of the company. Toward the close of the evening, however, he had retired to a secluded corner to refresh himself with a brief nap, when, just as he was losing consciousness, a voice cried in his ear, and a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder :

"Counselor, counselor ! Come, wake up, we want you to join a wager. You know Mutabor, the brute that threw me into the mire?"

"Yes, yes," returned Herr Dreyfuss, blinking drows-

ily at the disturber of his rest. "What's the matter? What did you say? I don't hear very well. I'm getting old."

"Getting old?" smilingly repeated Baron Von Menken. "Shame on you, counselor! Who would admit that epicures like ourselves ever get old?"

"I take it back. I take it back, baron. But what is the matter?"

"We are going to have a wager with Baron Von Menken," explained Lieutenant Von Wedell, "and we want you to join us. You know Mutabor, the skittish beast I bought from Count Kieselberg, and can't ride because he has been so terribly chafed by the bit?"

"He's a beauty, though," observed Dreyfuss. "Limbs like steel and a chest of iron—"

"Of what use are admirable points if I can't manage the beast?" interposed Von Wedell. "It is utterly impossible to ride him."

"I say it is not impossible," said Menken. "Our wager is this, Dreyfuss: *I* contend that Mutabor is an excellent riding horse if one knows how to manage him. Neither Kieselberg nor our friend here understands how to do that."

"Thanks for the compliment," retorted Mutabor's owner. "We shall see who will win the wager. Baron Menken," he continued, turning toward Herr Dreyfuss, "has taken four bets that your little Francisco can shame us all by managing the horse as easily as if Mutabor were a trained poodle. What say you?"

"That is rather a bold declaration," slowly replied Dreyfuss. "*I* think Mutabor needs a much heavier rider than a feather-weight like Francisco."

General approval greeted this decision, as the counselor was known to be a judge of horses. Menken, however, shook his head, and said:

"I am sorry to disagree with you, my dear counselor, but I insist that I am right."

"Take his bet, counselor—take his bet!" cried the lieutenant, swinging his eyeglasses by their cord around his head. "The baron must be punished for his obstinacy."

"I will take any bets that are offered," said Menken, "though I must confess it will be taking advantage of you, for I am sure to win. Allow me to make a proposition?"

"Go ahead! Go ahead!" cried several voices.

"Thanks. I propose that, if the counselor loses, he must let me have his Francisco to take the place of my infirm jockey, Thompson. If I lose, then I will give five hundred marks for a champagne supper, to which all here present shall be invited."

Uproarious applause followed this proposition; a wine-glass was dashed on the floor, and a young, rather overheated portrait-painter mounted a chair to toast Baron Von Menken, the counselor, Wedell, Mutabor, Francisco and a dozen more.

"Silence! Silence!" at last roared Herr Dreyfuss. "I want to say that I take Herr Von Menken's bet."

"Francisco will win," said Menken later, when all but he had taken leave of the host of the evening; "then we shall have the lad in our power. Mutabor is an excellent animal, only a little ticklish in the back. That is why Wedell cannot manage him. Francisco is light, and active as a squirrel. Not long ago he brought a message to me on the race-course, and I allowed him to trot Tollkopf several times around the track. I convinced myself then that he knew how to manage a horse. But I waited until they had all gone, because I want to talk to you about my conversation with Herr Wyrenberg. What he told me proves

that Cadama is a thorough scoundrel. Although Colonel Hackert assured me that Carmella, Hilgersdorf and himself were the only persons who knew of the exchange of infants, yet, after reading Cadama's forged attestation, I feared he, too, might have been in the Tessin village at that time. Herr Wyrenberg, however, also assured me that no strangers were there but himself, Hackert, Hilgersdorf and Carmella. That he does not in the least suspect a secret in the Hackert family I am convinced by his manner. Should Cadama really attempt to foist his false attestation on a court of justice, we shall have in Wyrenberg a valuable witness. I was greatly relieved to hear the artist's favorable opinion of Carmella's character, though it would be a psychological riddle had Lucia's mother been a worthless woman. Dreyfuss tells me that Francisco cherishes an idolatrous love for his deceased mother. Wyrenberg describes her as chaste and honorable, and this agrees with what I have managed, with the assistance of the German consul in Rome, to learn about her. Carmella became a *vivandière* to save herself from dishonor.

"Hilgersdorf, who was a well-known *roué*, was not acquainted with her before he saw her in the Tessin village. You know, Elimar, why I feared that he had been. I read those passages to you from my diary, wherein I recorded the singular meeting between Carmella and Hilgersdorf in the mess-tent at Podol, in '66. I think now that the reason she came to the German camp, she wanted some news of her child, and knowing Hilgersdorf and Hackert to be Prussian officers, her mother's heart prompted her to seek them. I wish I had been convinced of this earlier," he added, with a sigh. "Never dreaming that Hackert's life hung by a thread, I was imprudent enough to confide to him, on

that last fatal day, my suspicion that Hilgersdorf was Lucia's father. The idea excited him so fearfully that—I shall never cease to blame myself for mentioning it—I believe it hastened his death. How glad I am that my—" he paused abruptly and bit his lip, then added, with some confusion—"that Lucia is not the daughter of that brutal, evil-minded Hilgersdorf I cannot tell you. But it is late, and time for me to be thinking of going. God grant that Cadama's plans may miscarry before Lucia learns that she is not the daughter of the man whom she revered above all beings on earth. If I win my bet, and Francisco comes to me, I think I can manage to get a confession from him. Then I need hesitate no longer to arrest that Italian knave Cadama. To the fulfillment of my project Elimar, let us empty a parting glass."





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MUTABOR.

On the morning after the birthday festivities in Elimar Waldau's apartments, the gentlemen, taking part in the wager concerning the horse, Mutabor, met in a private riding-academy in the suburbs of the city.

Francisco, who was also present, had grown pale when the counselor told him of the wager with Baron Von Menken. The lad remembered his last conversation with Signor Cadama, and the command to enter the baron's service. Was it merely chance that promised to aid him in obeying the *signor's* command?

Francisco admired Baron Von Menken, who always treated him kindly ; and he would hardly have hesitated to leave Herr Dreyfuss's service had it not been that Lucia von Hackert was a frequent visitor at the counselor's. The poor lad had a hard struggle between fear of Cadama and love for his sister ; but the *signor's* threats at last forced him to silence the voice of his heart.

With the jockey's costume, he had donned for the occasion, the old desire to speed along the race-course returned to Francisco's breast. Menken was right : "He who was once triumphant on the track, for him the saddle was a throne of roses !" Francisco was de-

lighted at the prospect of a mount on the refractory Mutabor.

All eyes were directed toward the little jockey when he entered the academy.

"A famous lad!" observed Lieutenant Markwitz to Lieutenant Von Wedell, who would have been better satisfied if the "famous lad" had not looked quite so capable of riding the fractious Mutabor.

"One moment, my dear boy," whispered Baron Von Menken to Francisco. "Don't be in the least afraid of Mutabor. He is an excellent beast, but tender-mouthed and ticklish. Sit well forward and keep a slack rein, and all will go well. Above all, be extremely careful in mounting not to startle the beast."

Francisco nodded understandingly. The gates were opened, and Mutabor, led by a groom, entered the ring.

Mutabor was a noble specimen of horse flesh—stately, of perfect form; with a graceful neck, daintily molded limbs and feet, nervous and muscular. But the restive tossing of the head, the nervous force, the slight quivering of the flanks told at a glance of improper management and training.

The spectators assembled in the ring formed a half-circle about the horse. The majority were loud in their praises of his beauty. Wedell alone found fault with him.

"You will see," he assured his friends, "of what use such beauty is in a horse—he is like a lovely woman who has no character."

The young portrait painter, who had been so extravagantly merry the preceding evening, affected to object to a simile so disrespectful to the fair sex. While he was remonstrating with the lieutenant, Francisco approached the horse, took the reins carefully from the hands of the groom, stroked the glossy neck for several

seconds, then with a sudden agile movement leaped to the saddle.

Before Mutabor could recover from his astonishment at this sudden *coup*, Francisco, with knees firmly pressing the panting sides, his body leaning forward, the reins held loosely in his hand, urged the horse forward. But Mutabor obstinately refused to obey. He stamped angrily with his forefeet, pricked up his ears, and snorted his resentment. Then the spurs were applied very gently. Mutabor made a sudden spring that scattered the spectators in all directions, galloped furiously a short distance, then fell into a irregular trot. Gradually, however, his pace became quieter and more even until at last it was as easy and regular as the most timid rider could desire.

"Bravo ! Bravo !" applauded the lieutenant. "That's a gait no one could find fault with ! One—two. One—two—regular as a parade march !"

Herr Dreyfuss was also astonished, and could not say enough in praise of his little groom's accomplishments.

"You have won, Herr Von Menken," he called to the baron, who was leaning against a post near the entrance, a smile lighting his grave features.

"By Jove, now I'll try it again !" exclaimed Von Wedell suddenly. "I can't see why I should not be able to ride the beast as well as that little jockey."

He beckoned to Francisco, who trotted up and dismounted. The lieutenant took the reins, laid his hand on the saddle and was about to vault to the horse's back when Mutabor suddenly kicked out with both hind feet.

A sharp cry of pain rang through the building ; several men dashed toward the frantic horse, others ran toward the lieutenant who was rising from the

sawdust, while still others gathered about Francisco who had been struck by Mutabor's hoofs, and lay with closed eyes on the ground.

The first to reach Francisco was Baron Von Menken, who raised the unconscious lad's head and tore open his jaunty blouse, blood trickling from his pale lips as he did so. Mutabor had given him a fearful blow on the breast. The livid wound was a horrifying sight, and Menken groaned when he saw it. General confusion now ensued. Lieutenant Von Wedell cursed and stormed and threatened to shoot Mutabor, the counselor dispatched three grooms for as many doctors, Waldau sent for cologne, water and brandy, while the majority of the excited spectators stood or ran helplessly about inquiring what they should do.

"The injury is a serious one," said the baron to Waldau, as the two bent over the lad. "I shall remove him at once to my apartments. Do you hasten to Doctor Nobbser and beg him to come as quickly as possible."

He gently lifted the seemingly lifeless body of the injured lad and carried him to his carriage which was waiting at the door of the academy.

"Mother of Moses!" groaned Janisch, who was seated on the box. "Another unfortunate!"

The counselor now hurried up.

"Haden't we better take him to my house?" he asked, out of breath. "He has his own room there, and will be well cared for!"

"Haven't I won him?" responded Menken, smiling sadly. "From this hour I am responsible for the lad's welfare."

Herr Dreyfuss replied with a shrug, and the carriage rolled away toward Baron Von Menken's residence, where the injured lad was carefully laid on a bed.

Soon afterward Herr Waldau arrived with the doctor, whose cheerful countenance became very grave when he beheld the terrible wound in the lad's breast.

"It is a very serious injury," he observed, after he had examined the wound. "I cannot tell yet whether there are internal injuries. I hope not! The lad is vigorous and healthy, and has a breast of iron. Nature will, therefore, be of great assistance in restoring him."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was yet quite early the next morning when Signor Cadama's card was brought to Baron Von Menken.

"A singular chance, baron, has led you to act the good Samaritan to two sons of Italy," began the *signor* effusively, on entering Herr Von Menken's sitting-room. "Heaven, I am sure, will reward you for your—"

"Pray spare me all fine speeches, *signor*," interrupted the baron. "I am not a lover of flattery. Can I be of any service to you? Or to what do I owe this early call?"

The baron's curt tone and evidently intentional neglect to offer his visitor a chair offended the attorney, who swallowed his resentment, however, and said pleasantly :

"I heard by chance yesterday evening that Francisco Pedretti, who is a little acquaintance of mine, had been fatally injured and taken to your hospitable roof, baron. I came this morning to ask how it is with the poor lad. Not so bad as is reported, I trust?"

"On the contrary, *signor*, there are hopes that he will very soon be restored to health," replied Menken. "The horse's hoofs struck the lad's breast-bone, but, fortunately, did not break it. There is a severe flesh-wound, which may result in inflammation. I trust not, however, and believe that Francisco will be out again

in a fortnight, or three weeks at the latest. He will be pleased to hear that a fellow-countryman has been good enough to inquire about him. Shall I tell him you left your good wishes for him?"

Cadama seemed to deliberate a moment before replying :

"Perhaps he will more easily remember me if I leave my name." He drew the note-book—so familiar to the baron—from his pocket, took from it a card, hastily penciled a couple of words on it and handed it to Herr Von Menken. "May I trouble you to give him that?"

The baron bowed stiffly, and the *signor*, after a deferential courtesy, quitted the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

Francisco's recovery was not so rapid as the baron had at first believed it would be, but he grew steadily, if slowly, better. The youthful *campagnole* possessed a tough constitution. Despite his effeminate appearance, he was muscular and hardy as a North American trapper. He had breathed, without injury to his health, the malarial vapors of the Campagna ; had often enough, without suffering for it afterward, slept without covering in the cold fogs of an autumnal night, on the marble steps of a church in Rome. Such exposure, instead of injuring, had hardened him and rendered him capable of endurance.

In less than eight days after the accident, the lad's pulse again beat regularly, and all fears of a relapse were at an end. The doctor, however, fearing that the lungs might have been weakened, and knowing the lad to be unused to the stormy weather of our northern winters, advised the baron to take him back to Italy.

To Menken such an arrangement was not unpleasant. Counselor Dreyfuss had told him that he intended taking his wife to some quiet place in northern Italy,

where Annie Doring would join them. Lucia von Hackert also had decided to accompany Herr Dreyfuss and his wife on their transalpine journey.

To restore Francisco's health was not the only reason why Baron Von Menken decided on a pilgrimage to the Riviéra. He hoped, while on the shore of the Mediterranean, to learn something about the earlier life of Carmella Boccani.

Fearing that all disagreeable recollections might retard Francisco's recovery—and there was reason to believe that Cadama would arouse in the lad's mind recollections which would be anything but agreeable—the baron had not yet mentioned the *signor's* visit. Now, however, he believed he might venture a first attempt at "converting" the little *campagnole*. Francisco was only a servant, but the baron had watched over him with a father's care; had treated him as tenderly as he would have an equal or a near and dear kinsman.

Francisco had received his master's attentions with gratitude, and more than once had warmly thanked him. But the baron wanted something more.

It was the beginning of the twilight hour when Herr Von Menken entered the sick-room. Francisco was lying among the pillows, with closed eyes. He opened them and smiled an affectionate greeting when he saw the baron.

"I bring you a greeting from a Roman acquaintance, my lad," said Menken, seating himself beside the bed. "The man called to inquire about you, and left this card."

Francisco seized the card. A sudden spasm convulsed his pale face when he read what was written on it. He closed his eyes again, turned his head on the pillow and muttered:

"*Bricconi!* The heartless villain!"

Herr Von Menken took the boy's hot hand in his, and bending over him, said :

"Yes, Francisco, Cadama is a villain. It was not friendship for you that brought him here, but fear, lest in your gratitude to me, your nurse, you might forget yourself and betray him. Don't agitate yourself, my boy. Forget Cadama's visit, and think only of two others, from real friends—Counselor Dreyfuss and—your sister."

Francisco started violently. Half eagerly, half in fear, his eyes rested on the baron's face, while his fingers unconsciously closely clasped the hand that held his.

"From—my sister?" he whispered. "Merciful Heaven—then you know—"

"Everything, my dear lad, everything," interposed Menken, gently stroking the boy's damp forehead. "I know everything, and I now confess to you that I had an object in view when I brought you here. I hoped to win your gratitude, and through it your confidence. When Lucia's adopted father lay on his death-bed, I vowed that I would guard the child whom all the world believes to be his own, and who herself believes it, and with God's help I intend to keep that vow. I want Lucia's brother to leave the enemy's camp and join sides with me. Have you no brotherly affection in your heart, my lad, that you work with that evil-minded scoundrel, Cadama, to ruin your sister?"

Francisco hid his face in the pillow. His slight frame shook with convulsive sobbing.

"Confide in me, Francisco," continued the baron, bending over the weeping lad. "You have a true friend in me. As I have sworn to help Lucia so will I help and guard you against your enemies. You shall

begin a new life, become a different person, for Lucia's brother must no longer occupy a menial position. Will you let me help you? Will you let me be your true friend, Francisco? Will you confide all your past to me in order that I may know how to render harmless those who would ruin you soul and body as well as despoil your sister of her fortune and her name. Speak, Francisco, will you let me help you?"

Slowly, very slowly, the lad lifted himself from the pillow and turned his dusky, tear-stained face toward his benefactor.

"You mean well by me, baron. I feel it," he said, brokenly. "I know, too, that I may safely tell you everything, that I may freely unburden my heart to you of all its shame and sorrow. I have done much that was wrong. After my dear mother died I lost all hope, all desire to do good. I sank lower and lower, and the one who thrust me deeper and deeper into disgrace is Cadama—my tormentor, my demon of evil!"

He paused and breathed heavily. Menken saw that he would have to be careful.

"Cadama, my dear boy," he said soothingly, "has no more power over you. You need fear him no longer. I intend henceforward to take care of you, from this hour you are under my protection—"

"Oh, you don't know, you don't know!" excitedly interrupted Francisco. "The words on the *signor's* card are a terrifying threat, and he will carry it out if I disobey his commands. 'Ancona' is the prison for the lowest criminals, and 'Caserta,' the house of correction, and Cadama has the power to send me to either place, for he knows that I was accused of stealing some valuable coins. That I am innocent of the crime I swear by the Holy Virgin! I am innocent—innocent! But who will believe my word against that of Signor

Cadama? Even your powerful aid, baron, cannot save me from Ancona or Caserta if I disobey the *signor*."

"I repeat what I said, Francisco. You need not be afraid of Cadama," responded Menken assuringly. "He will not dare accuse you, as, by so doing, he will dig his own grave! He threatens you merely to intimidate you. He knows well that he himself is in danger of prison walls. Believe me, Francisco, Cadama's threats are harmless—harmless as air."

"Oh, I wish I might believe it!" cried the lad, clasping his hands. "If I could, I would shake off the fetters which have bound me so long, and become free and honest again! Come nearer, please, baron, and I will tell you everything. After my mother died," he began after a short pause, "there was no one to care for me, and I made my living as best I could. One day, after I had been unable to get anything to do for nearly a week, a man came to me and told me that an artist wished to engage me as a model, and wanted me to meet him that evening in front of the Palazzo Borghese. I was very glad of the opportunity to earn something, and went to the Palazzo as directed, where I found the man who had told me about the artist. He said the artist was dining in a *café* nearby, and asked me to wait in the portico of the palace.

"The night was very dark, and it was still darker in the arcade under which I stood. I had been there about a quarter of an hour, and was beginning to fear I had been deceived, when I heard voices whispering near me, and before I could turn, two dark forms dashed past me into the street. At the same moment the bell, which hangs in the portico to summon aid in case of any unusual event in the palace, rang, and a voice from an upper window called:

"*Un ladro!* A thief! A thief!"

"In a trice servants were rushing hither and thither. A door was flung open, and a third dark form came flying down the steps. As he brushed past me, almost throwing me over, I heard the clinking of gold coins, and felt something slip into my coat pocket. The next instant a rough hand seized my collar, and a loud voice called :

" 'Here's one of them ! Where is the guard ?'

"Before I could realize what had happened I was hustled into a carriage, a man took his seat beside me, and we drove rapidly down the street.

"I must have received a blow on the head, for I became unconscious and knew nothing more. When I opened my eyes again I was lying on a leather-covered lounge in a small, plainly furnished room ; and the man who had been with me in the carriage—the man whose fox-face has persecuted me ever since that hour, and who has become the curse and terror of my life—was standing, with folded arms, by my side, sharply surveying me. When he saw that I had recovered consciousness, he said :

" 'I know you, Francisco Boccani, and am glad that chance has brought about this meeting, for I have been searching all over Rome for you. Listen : You are accused of being an accomplice of the burglars who robbed the Palazzo Borghese, and will be convicted if it becomes known that you have five valuable coins in your pocket. A singular chance enabled me to rescue you under the pretense of driving you in my carriage to the guard-house. I did not save you out of pity for your youth, my lad. I had an object in view. I want you to do me a favor—a favor that is neither dishonorable nor dangerous. On the contrary, it will right a wrong and bring you riches. Look out of this window. Down yonder are two policemen. A word from me

and they will arrest you, and you pass the remainder of this night on the hard boards of a prison bed. Of course, you will deny that you stole the coins, but the judges will only smile incredulously and ask how you came to have them in your pocket. Think you they will believe your story? The prisoners in Caserta pluck wool as do the country-women in winter; and the criminals in Ancona drag foot-chains after them, like caged wild beasts. Neither place is a pleasant abode, but you will be sent to one of them if those coins are found on you.'

"That, baron, is what Signor Cadama said to me, and I lay there and ground my teeth and cursed my ill-luck. Then I thought over what the *signor* had said. He wanted a favor from me that was neither dishonorable nor dangerous, but would right a wrong and bring me riches. My curiosity conquered. I wanted to know what the favor could be. Before he would tell me he asked me to sign the paper he took from his pocket. It was an attestation in which I acknowledged that I had stolen the coins, and I weakly gave it my signature, thus yielding myself to the power of that devil in human form! He sent for some wine, and, after we had drunk it, he told me why he had searched all over Rome for me. It was a wonderful tale, and had for its characters my sainted mother and my sister Lucia—who I believed had died when she was a little baby. I dare say you know the story, baron. It was about my sister, who was still living, as the daughter of a wealthy Prussian officer, whose own child lay in the grave with its mother in a little Ticino graveyard. As Lucia had not been legally adopted, she was not, of course, so Cadama said, legally justified in becoming the heir of Colonel Von Hackert, and the *signor* was going to undertake the cause of the

legal heir, in case any injustice might be done—to ‘right the wrong,’ as he expressed it. When I asked him how he had obtained knowledge of the family secret, he gave me an evasive reply—”

Here the baron interrupted with a question :

“Did your mother never tell you that your sister was still living?”

“No, baron. On the contrary, she always spoke of my sister as having died when she was a little baby.”

“Perhaps she told Cadama,” suggested Von Menken.

“No, baron, that could not be, for the *signor* never saw my mother.”

Menken gazed thoughtfully into the soft, gray twilight which was settling over the earth.

“This is very puzzling,” he observed, in a musing tone. “A third person familiar with the secret must have confided it to the *signor*. Who could it have been?”

“That is a question I often asked myself, baron, until one day when I got hold of a clue. The day after the burglary at the palace, I read in a newspaper that all but one of the thieves had been arrested, the one who had escaped having in his possession the coins which had been taken from the numismatic collection. That one, baron, was myself. In my terror lest I might be arrested if I ventured on the street, I remained in hiding for several days in Signor Cadama’s apartments. It was then I discovered the clue I mentioned. The *signor* had given me some little chores to do, and one day when I was engaged in destroying the contents of the waste-paper basket, my eyes chanced to fall on a piece of paper on which were these words :

“‘SAN REMO, October, 1880.

“‘I am very ill, therefore able only to write a line. If you want to accomplish your purpose, you must not be in too great a hurry. Remember that so long as Hackert lives he can, with a few written words, destroy all your plans.’

"All of the signature but three letters, 'Hil,' was torn away."

"'Hil,' " repeated the baron ; then, with sudden animation : "Hilgersdorf, of course. You are right, my lad, it is a clue. But go on with your story. What were Cadama's first demands?"

A burning blush of shame covered Francisco's face.

"He asked me to write letters, extorting money, to Colonel Von Hackert," was the hesitating reply. "I had an easy life while with the *signor*, but I cursed in secret the evil hour which had given me into his power. One day he came to me greatly excited, and told me that Colonel Von Hackert was dead, and that he was compelled to go at once to Berlin. He said he had secured a good situation for me in the Gothard Tunnel, where I could remain until he sent for me. Soon afterward we both quitted Rome, I under the name of Francisco Pedretti, which I had assumed at the *signor's* command. How I came into Signor Doring's service, and through him into that of the counselor, you already know, baron. Had I entertained any doubts as to the truth of the story Cadama told me about my sister, they would have vanished when I heard Signor Doring tell his wife how closely I resembled her friend, Lucia von Hackert. I knew then that I had a sister, and that I loved her, notwithstanding the fact that I had never seen her, and was hand in hand with her enemies. I have but one more confession to make, baron. A few days before Mutabor gave me this painful souvenir, Cadama ordered me to seek employment with you. How chance aided me to accomplish this, you know."

"Do you know why Cadama wanted you to enter my service?" inquired the baron, with renewed interest.

Again the lad's face was suffused with the hue of shame.

"Yes, baron ; I was to keep a close watch on you, and steal any documents relating to Lucia's birth which you might have."

"The devil !" ejaculated the baron, excitedly. "So the scoundrel suspects me—suspects, or knows that Lucia's fate is locked in my desk? You forget, most worthy *signor*, that others can plot as well as yourself ! And that a Higher Power regulates the world according to His own wise judgment." Menken rose and walked to the window, where he leaned his forehead for several seconds against the pane. Then he returned to the bedside. "After all that you have told me, my dear Francisco," he resumed, "the burglary at the Palazzo Borghese seems to me to have been arranged simply to enable Signor Cadama to get you into his power. However, we need not discuss that now. For the time being, you must continue to let Cadama believe that you are his tool. He must not be allowed to suspect that you have ceased to obey him. As for the rest, we may rejoice that everything has turned out so well. Let us first thank Heaven, and then Mutabor !"





## CHAPTER XIX.

### CONFERENCES AND RESOLUTIONS.

Frau Ilona von Hilgersdorf had returned to Berlin, more beautiful and fascinating than ever, but the capital seemed to have lost its attraction for her. Since the scandalous notice in the newspaper, which had connected her name with that of Herr Waldau, society had gradually withdrawn its favor from her. The young widow's eccentricities and her disregard for convention had, even before the unfortunate episode with the artist, given much food for the gossips; but she had troubled her pretty head very little about what society in general said or thought of her. Not until her intimate acquaintances began to treat her coldly and cease to visit her did she awake to the fact that a woman, however lovely she may be, cannot with impunity defy the opinion of the world.

A jealous woman whose vanity has been offended, is prone to lay the blame for her ill-fortune at the door of her rival. Frau Ilona believed nothing less than that Lucia von Hackert was the sole cause of the insulting coldness with which she was treated by her former acquaintances. Lucia alone was to blame for the hateful stories which had been, and still were told about her. Believing this, it was but natural that she

should hate her rival, and welcome any chance that would enable her to revenge herself. This chance had been offered her by Signor Cadama.

One day the *signor*, with a large portefolio under his arm, made his appearance before Frau Von Hilgersdorf.

"First of all, *signora*," he began, after his usual deferential salutation. "Allow me to tell you that you look more beautiful than ever, more sparkling and radiant—"

Ilona's harsh laugh interrupted him.

"Your flattery, *signor*, is but another proof that a man never speaks the truth to my sex. I feel anything but sparkling and radiant, as you express it."

"Then you certainly deceive your looks, *signora*," he responded with another low bow. "But may I ask what has happened? I may be able to help you with advice or action!"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf flung herself angrily into the corner of the sofa.

"I don't need any one to help me," she answered curtly. "I am able to endure ill-treatment from narrow-minded Philistines, as I am able to bear the poisonous slanders of a low-born beggar. I don't care a straw for these strait-laced Berlineſe!"

A satisfied smile played around the *signor's* thin lips, but his tone was gently expostulatory when he said:

"You are excited, *signora*. You should not let trifles annoy you. I can guess that that girl, Lucia—"

"Yes, it is Lucia!" interrupted the widow, her eyes flaming. "She has been telling more lies about me, else why does all the world avoid me as if I were poison? Soon after my return to town I left cards with all my acquaintances, and, will you believe it, not a single

visit has been returned ! What has happened, I ask myself ? What can have happened, but that Lucia, the malicious creature, has been telling all sorts of vile tales about me."

The Italian's face expressed deepest sympathy, while in his heart he rejoiced that he had called at so opportune a moment.

"I am afraid it is too true, *signora*," he returned, shaking his head sadly. "You know why the girl dislikes and tries to injure you. But, I ask you, is it worth while to anger yourself over any tales such a creature may invent ? No—no, indeed ! It will not be long before the so-called Baroness Von Hackert-Selchern will cease to play a *rôle* in respectable society."

"Are you speaking the truth, *signor* ?" demanded the widow, fixing a sharp glance on his face. "Are your plans sufficiently advanced that you may expect soon to tear that unscrupulous adventuress from her lofty pedestal ? Are you not exaggerating merely to please me ?"

"I am not given to exaggeration, *signora*," with a show of injured dignity returned the Italian. "What I tell you is true. Only two things are wanting to conclude the last act of the drama : One is a paper now in possession of a third party, which will very soon come into my hands ; the other, is a promise from your own lovely lips, *signora*."

"What do you mean ?" asked Frau Ilona, looking expectantly at the *signor*, who opened the portfolio, took from it a packet of papers, one of which he unfolded as he replied :

"You were good enough some time ago, *signora*, to trust me with some old letters of your husband's. Among them I managed to find what I wanted. Will you read this ?"

He handed her an apparently worn paper, yellowed with age, with half-faded writing.

"Examine it closely, *signora*, and be good enough to tell me if you recognize the writing?"

"I—ye—es," stammered the widow, growing pale. "It looks—it is my husband's hand."

"You are right," assented Cadama, with a satisfied smile. "This document, a legal one as you see," he continued in a significant tone, "was executed in the little village of B——, Canton Tessin, in the presence of Attorney Guilio Cadama, from Rome. You could swear, in a court of justice, *signora*, that this document was written by your husband, the deceased General Von Hilgersdorf, and that it was found, after his death, among his papers?"

"As I know nothing to the contrary, I fancy my conscience would permit me to take such an oath," responded the widow, but she grew a shade paler. "However," she added quickly, "I must beg that you will not ask me to swear to anything, unless it is *absolutely unavoidable*. A court of justice, you know, *signor*, is not a pleasant place for a lady."

Cadama raised his hands in a deprecatory gesture.

"Most respected, *signora*! Believe me, I should not think of summoning *you* to a court-room, unless, as you say, it became absolutely unavoidable. But let us drop the unpleasant subject. I see how fearfully your nerves are affected. You have already suffered too much! Have you heard of Rahlou's latest idiocy?"

"A fresh literary *faux pas*? No, I have not seen a newspaper for several days!"

The attorney searched in his portfolio and produced a newspaper clipping.

"The fellow is a born idiot," he observed. "Instead of the delicately worded item, for which I furnished the

facts, he makes a direct onslaught in yesterday's paper. May I read it to you?"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf nodded assent, and Cadama adjusted his *pince-nez* on the bridge of his nose.

" 'Our readers,' he began, 'doubtless remember the so-called burglary last winter at the residence of Colonel Von Hackert. The night of the colonel's demise a safe was feloniously opened, but nothing, apparently, taken from it. As it was impossible to learn if anything had been taken, the investigation was dropped in a few days. We hear, however, that the investigation has been renewed, it having been found that important family documents—of great value to the colonel's heirs—were stolen. We hope very soon to acquaint our readers with another mystery which bears a close relation to the theft of documents.'

"This, *signora*, is the stupid manner in which Rahlou performs his work. I shall certainly drop him if he does not use more *finesse*."

"What have you learned about the burglary?" inquired the widow, turning the bracelet on her wrist.

"It is now known that Colonel Von Hackert preserved in his safe the papers which relate to Lucia's birth. It is also known that Lucia and a confidant of her father's—Baron Von Menken, secretly took possession of those papers the night the colonel died, and carelessly neglected to lock the safe again. The colonel's solicitor noticed this fact the morning after the burglary—we will continue to call it so—and he at once notified the police, in defiance of Lucia's objections. The investigation which followed was a mere farce. The police had been cunningly duped by Herr Von Menken, who is a clever rascal."

"Is Herr Von Menken the person to whom you refer as holding possession of the documents you hope to secure?" again inquired the widow.

Cadama nodded a silent assent.

"Then it certainly was very stupid of Rahlou to put the baron on his guard,"

"Yes, was it not? But I hope to outwit Herr Von Menken in spite of it. By the way, *signora*, when do you go to San Remo?"

"To-morrow. There is nothing to keep me longer in Berlin," she replied, frowning.

"Shouldn't you like to employ a *cicerone*—a born Italian who knows the Riviera like a book?"

"Perhaps I might. Do you wish to recommend a friend of yours?"

"I should like to recommend myself."

"You?" Frau Von Hilgersdorf's amazement was not affected. "*Mon Dieu!* I thought you had enough to keep you employed in Berlin."

The *signor* rested his elbows on the table in front of him.

"So it would seem," he observed carelessly; "and I should find quite enough to keep me occupied were it not that the persons in whom I am most interested are going on a pilgrimage toward the south. Counselor Dreyfuss, his wife, Signorina Lucia, and her duenna; and lastly—but by no means least—Baron Von Menken."

"What? The baron, too? How then do you propose to get hold of the documents you speak of?"

"That is why I follow in the baron's wake, *signora!* But, jesting aside, don't you think you could make use of me as a *cicerone*—courier—tutor?"

Frau Von Hilgersdorf laughed heartily.

"I might try! We will talk about it—"

"I take that as a half-promise," interrupted the *signor*. "Let me add, that I value good treatment above any salary you may choose to give me."

Frau Ilona laughed again. Her good humor was restored.

About the same time Baron Von Menken was rest-

lessly pacing the floor of his study. His hands were clasped behind him ; deep lines marked his forehead. One could see now how old and careworn he was. Rahlou's latest effusions had agitated him fearfully. Immediately after reading it he had hastened to the police commissioner and begged him to deny, in the next issue of the paper, that the investigation had been renewed. Herr Von Holgen had complied with his request, but of what avail was the denial? All the world had seen Rahlou's article. Lucia also had read it—Lucia, the one among them all whose suspicions must not be aroused !

A knock at the door interrupted his meditations, and Francisco, still pale, but more cheerful than formerly, entered the room.

"Well, my lad?" exclaimed the baron, turning expectantly toward him. "What news do you bring from the *signor*?"

"Important and gratifying news, baron. Signor Cadama had just returned from a visit to Frau Von Hilgersdorf, whom he is going to accompany to Italy. As courier, *he* said ; but I fancy he is going south because we are going."

"Nothing could be better!" in a satisfied tone responded the baron. "There is nothing now to detain me in Berlin. Did Cadama tell you anything else of interest?"

He repeated his usual warnings, and wanted to know if I had discovered anything of importance. According to the instructions you gave me, I told him you had a number of documents marked 'Hackert papers,' which you kept locked in a leather portfolio, and which you would likely carry with you on your journey. As you were very careful never to leave the key of the portfolio where I could get it, I had not yet had an op-

portunity to get hold of the papers, but I hoped to do so when we got to Italy. I am certain that Cadama still believes I fear his threats, consequently he does not suspect me. He ordered me to keep a close watch on all your movements; asked what plans you had made for our journey, and gave me instructions how to communicate with him."

Menken nodded approvingly.

"So far so good! I think we can be ready to start with the counselor's party; I shall attend to the passports at once. What is it, Janisch?" he asked of the old servant, who at that moment entered the room with a visiting card. Menken read the name of his visitor, an expression of joyful surprise passing over his face. "Show the lady into the drawing-room, Janisch. I will be down immediately." In a very few moments he entered the drawing-room, and with cordial welcome in his face and tone, said: "I am surprised and delighted, Fräulein von Hackert, to see you in my house." He rolled an easy-chair toward her and continued: "I trust the object of this unexpected and welcome visit is a pleasant one?"

Lucia ignored the gesture which invited her to be seated; she merely laid her hand on the back of the chair, and remained standing.

"My object, Herr Von Menken—to proceed at once to the business which brought me here—is an article in yesterday's newspaper which refers to a renewal of the investigation of the burglary at our house the night my father died. You read it, I presume?" For a moment the baron lost all self-control; his face paled; he was obliged to lay his trembling hand on the chair beside him. He would not speak, for his voice would have betrayed his agitation; he merely bowed a silent assent to her question. "Do you know who wrote the arti-

cle?" she asked again, fixing her clear eyes on his face. "I should like to become acquainted with the author, for I have an idea that the person who seems so familiar with our family affairs could explain many things which are a mystery to me."

Menken avoided meeting the girl's questioning glance; he let his eyes rest on the charms of his watch, with which he was toying.

"Allow me, dear miss," he responded with difficulty, speaking calmly, "to make a remark before I answer your question. I feared, when I read that ridiculous article, that you might be annoyed by it; consequently, I went at once to see the police commissioner to learn if the investigation had been renewed, and found that it had not. What sort of family papers could have been in the safe? I had the honor of being one of your father's most intimate friends, and surely *I*, if any one, ought to know if there is any mystery connected with the Hackert-Selchern family! For twenty years it has consisted of but three members—yourself, your father and your cousin Herbert. Furthermore, I never, for one moment, looked on this so-called burglary as anything but an oversight—a trifling neglect that might easily happen anywhere in a time of such excitement. My opinion was justified by the police; and Herr Von Holgen laughed at me when I called yesterday to request a denial. He says the whole thing is a 'silly canard,' the 'fanciful imagination of a newspaper reporter.' A denial, however, appeared in to-day's paper; therefore, you need trouble yourself no further about this journalistic bomb. That is the remark I wanted to make. Now I will answer your question. I think—nay, I am almost certain—that Rahlou wrote the article. You are, of course, at liberty to question the fellow, but you would demean yourself in so doing.

I speak thus frankly, Fräulein Lucia, because Rahlou is one of those unscrupulous persons whom it is best to avoid."

He ceased speaking. His eyes, which were still resting on the watch-charms, had been lifted only once to flash a swift glance toward the girlish figure near the window.

"I am not of your opinion, Herr Von Menken," quietly, but with decision, responded Lucia. "And I have reason to doubt that you believe what you have told me."

The baron started, but quickly regained his self-command.

"May I ask why you think I am not telling the truth?" he inquired, venturing an uncertain glance at her resolute face.

"Because I believe that Herr Rahlou tells the truth; and because I believe that you, Herr Von Menken, know that he does! My father's safe was secretly opened, that I know, and if the police say the contrary a dozen times! And I know, too, that some papers of importance were purloined. One does not, for a mere joke, surreptitiously open an iron safe at midnight!"

Menken felt as if an iron band were compressing his throat; he struggled for breath. An accuser stood before him, he felt it.

"Have you forgotten, miss," he said with apparent calm, but with anxiously beating heart, "that everything spoke against a forcible entry into your father's house? That you thought the safe had been carelessly left open? That you said as much to Solicitor Wallerstein and Herr Von Holgen?"

"I said so, Herr Von Menken," interposed Lucia, with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks. "Because I wanted to shield *you*."

Menken staggered as if beneath a heavy blow. He was unable to utter a word.

"Now that I have spoken," wrathfully continued Lucia, "I will finish! It has been a severe task to keep silent all this time. Herr Rahlou's article has loosed my tongue; it tells me that a fatal secret, a dark shadow rests on our name, and you, Herr Von Menken, know what it is. You may deny it, but you cannot deceive me. When I saw you standing that night by my father's bed, I was seized with an inexplicable dread. I felt as if something terrible threatened me. You and my father's faithful servant watched in the chamber of death that night, while I lay in the bed in my room with eyes open, and senses all alert, for I could not sleep. Suddenly I heard a door creek, and a stealthy footstep in the corridor. I have never known fear, so I rose, and noiselessly passed into my father's study. Had my coming alarmed the intruder, that he forgot to lock the safe again? The early dawn struggled through the partly open window and revealed a glittering object lying on the carpet close by the safe. I picked it up—it was a scarf-pin of curious design—one that I had often seen and admired, a single costly pearl set in a golden talon! Two minutes later I entered the chamber of death. You and the servant, who was sound asleep, were sitting by the bed. You looked at me so strangely—as if I were a ghost—that my courage failed me. I had the pin in my hand and went back to my room. All these weeks I have hesitated to speak. My silence may have made you believe that I thought the open safe an 'oversight,' a 'trifling neglect.' You know now why I believe Herr Rahlou's article; it is not the mere 'fanciful imagining' of a reporter. There is some mystery connected with our family, and you know what it is, you knew it when you took the papers

from the safe. Here," she added, and came swiftly toward him, holding the lost scarf-pin in her outstretched hand—"here, Herr Von Menken, I bring you your jewel, and beg you to give me what you took from me. Pray give me those papers. They belong to me—my father's heir, or if you will not give them to me, tell me what is the secret, the dark shadow which rests on my name?"

Lucia was close by his side ; he felt her breath, he saw her clasped hands raised pleadingly to him ; saw her bosom rise and fall with inward excitement. He saw, too, how eagerly, how beseechingly her eyes hung on his face, but he remained firm. He pressed his finger-nails deep into his palm, to dull, with a physical pain, the mental anguish he endured. For several seconds he looked at her in silence, then said, in a calm, even tone :

"You are right, Fräulein Lucia. I did tell an untruth when I called Rahlou's words the fanciful imagining of a reporter. They are partly true. I told a lie, but I did so—and I call God to witness that I speak truly now—in your interest. In your interest I opened your father's safe and took possession of a document you must not see. I acted according to your father's wishes ; it was his last request. I trembled when first you, then the solicitor, discovered the open safe. But it was not for myself that I trembled. It was for you—only for you. Believe me, I speak the truth when I say that no shadow, no disgrace, rests on the name of Hackert-Selchern. I cannot let you see the paper—you must not ask me. In guarding it I am but fulfilling your father's last wishes."

"Will nothing that I can say or do break your determination?" in despairing accents exclaimed Lucia, unconsciously laying her hand on his arm.

For an instant Herr Von Menken bent his head and closed his eyes. Then he drew a long, gasping breath, and said, in a voice that sounded strangely harsh and curt :

“No—no—I cannot—I dare not. Do not tempt me further.”

Utterly discouraged, Lucia's hands fell nervelessly to her side. Her gloomy eyes rested on the carpet at her feet. Once or twice her thin lips twitched convulsively. At last she lifted her face, and fixing her eyes on the baron, who had grown deathly pale, she said :

“I used to think, Herr Von Menken, that you were my friend, as well as my father's. I see now that I was mistaken. What would you reply were I to tell you that I do not believe you when you say you are guarding that paper in my interest—that I suspect you of acting in accord with Rahlou, and any other enemies of our family?”

The baron looked at her with such bitter reproach in his eyes that she almost regretted her harsh words.

“Were you to prove so cruelly unjust, miss, I should reply : ‘Go tell the police that I have robbed you—that I have your property in my possession.’ I should then be arrested, but before that could happen, the paper I have sworn to guard would be in hands as safe as my own.”

Lucia stamped her foot in angry desperation, opened her lips as if to speak, then turned abruptly and walked out of the room.

Menken looked after her. The pale autumn sunshine illumined her slender figure as she passed through the doorway. Then all was dusky shadow again about him. He sank suddenly back into a chair and laid his hands over his pallid face,



## CHAPTER XX.

### A PROFESSOR OF GAMING.

A stream of human beings poured through the Avenue de la Gare, in Nice. It was the hour for *déjeuner*, and the majority of the promenaders were on the way to one or another of the restaurants and *cafés* which lined either side of the handsome thoroughfare.

There is about the street-life of Nice an international character which distinguishes it from all other fashionable resorts in Europe. Travellers from all quarters of the globe saunter along the broad pavements and fill the various eating-houses.

This morning every chair under the orange-trees in the garden of the Café Americain was occupied when a young man, clad in a light-colored street-costume of latest cut, entered and looked vainly about for a vacant place. He was turning to quit the garden, when a sharp-toned voice exclaimed in French :

“*Sapristi*, Baron Von Hackert ! Not at Monte Carlo to-day ? Here—take a seat at my table ; there is not a vacant place in the *café*.”

The advanced age of the speaker was clearly perceptible, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal, by the aid of artificial means, his approaching infirmity. His long, thin face would have been transparently pale had it not been for the artistically applied *rouge* which gave

a youthful bloom to his cheeks; his pointed beard would not have shown so brilliant a raven hue without the art which had given the same tint to his delicately arched eyebrows. His clothes were of the latest fashion, but the jaunty morning coat, with its padded shoulders and the modish trousers, could restore nothing of the vanished youth their wearer sought to imitate. An individual of the Marquis du Cat's exterior would, very likely, have excited the curiosity of the street gamins in a German city. In international Nice, however, this caricature of youth attracted hardly any notice.

There was one feature of the marquis which did not require artificial aid—his eyes, which were large and coal-black, still gleamed with unimpaired brilliancy.

The younger man, in whom we recognize the student, Herbert von Hackert, seated himself on the round metal stool close to the marquis and ordered the waiter to bring him an absinthe. Then, slowly drawing the glove from his right hand, he said, in the language of the country :

"Allow me to ask the same question, my dear marquis : Why are not you at Monte Carlo ? The *croupiers* will be amazed to find you absent from the *trente-et-quarante*."

Du Cat smiled, and stroked his jetty mustache with his long, slim fingers.

"One needs to rest occasionally, *cher baron*," he responded. "He who, like myself, has devoted half his life to the goddess of luck, wearies of the green tables much sooner than youngsters like yourself, whose vigor and hopes are easily renewed. I am told you were in luck yesterday ?"

"Ye-es," stammered the student confusedly, his face reddening. "I expected to meet you at the Casino,

consequently I did not send you your share. Allow me," laying four bank-notes, which he took from his breast-pocket, in front of the marquis. "I won twelve thousand francs—four thousand for you."

"*Merci !*" laconically responded the Frenchman, folding the notes and thrusting them into his pocket. He blew the smoke from his cigarette from his nostrils and asked : "Do you still believe that my system is grounded on false premises ?"

"Beg pardon, marquis, but I never found fault with your 'system,' as you call it. I said, merely, that I could not understand how it was possible to calculate the chances of a game of hazard. That there are times and situations when one's judgment may aid one, I never ventured to deny."

"Well, well, we won't quarrel about it," returned Du Cat. "You have seen, more than once, that my system works favorably, and that is enough for me ! Let us change the subject : Have you, during your sojourn in Nice, seen anything of its attractions ? Hardly, I fancy ! With the exception of the brief stretch to Monte Carlo you know nothing of the picturesque environments. Am I right ?"

"I confess it with shame !" laughingly replied Hackert. "Satan understands how to secure his prey at Monte Carlo."

"Play has its attractions, my young friend," with the air of a sage observed the marquis ; "but you must take time for some excursions—these lovely autumn days are just the season for it. Very soon winter, with its storms, will be on us, and then adieu to all sight-seeing. Cimiez, Falicon, St. Pons, Montboron—all these are charming places. I have many acquaintances in beautiful Nice, and shall be delighted to introduce you. There is some one bowing to you," he

broke off to say. "A fellow-countryman, I presume?"

Hackert politely returned the salutation, but not without surprise, for the gentleman who had bowed to him was no other than Elimar Waldau.

Had the student followed Herr Waldau to the window-recess of the *café* furthest removed from the seats under the orange-trees, he would have been more astonished to recognize Baron Von Menken in the gentleman who was enjoying a glass of cognac and a cigar at the comfortable little table.

Menken and the artist greeted each other warmly. Although they had departed from Berlin on the same day, this was their first meeting for weeks. Waldau had visited Paris and Lyons before joining his friend at Nice.

"I went to the London House, where Francisco told me you were breakfasting, and was sent on here by the waiter," said Elimar, seating himself at the table. "I have quartered myself at the Iles Britanniques, where we can see each other every day. Do you know that young Hackert is here? Cadama is not far off, you may be sure."

"I met the *signor* several days ago in the public gardens," returned the baron. "He comes over almost every day from San Remo, and is already in communication with Francisco. That reminds me; we must keep silent about my visit to Rome, for I have an idea that Cadama suspects me."

"I am going to San Remo in a day or two to see our friends; then I shall be in a position to observe the *signor* more closely. From a letter I received from the counselor while I was in Paris, I gather that communication between the Hilgersdorf Villa and the *château* occupied by our friends is rather infrequent."

"For which the fair widow's conduct is alone to

blame," supplemented the baron. "Personally, I should prefer to have the intercourse between the villa and the *château* more lively than it is. One cannot tell what may be happening behind the scenes if one does not see a good deal of the actors!"

"Was your visit to Rome successful?" inquired Elimar in a low tone.

"Rather. I learned some important facts connected with Carmella Boccani's family. The little *vivandière* was really a scion of an ancient patrician family. She was not descended from a shepherd's hut on the *campagna*, as Cadama, for reasons of his own, told Francisco. Carmella's father, Giacomo Faresi, was a partner in a well-known Florentine banking-house, which he represented in Rome. He possessed a considerable fortune, the greater part of which he managed to squander before he died of a wound received in a duel. Before his death he made a will bequeathing what was left of his fortune to his two children, Annibile and Carmella, the former to act as guardian to his little sister, who was at that time only eight years old.

"Annibile, who was a frivolous youth, did not long survive his father. One year after the duel which resulted in the death of the father, the son shot himself, having first squandered all his own and his sister's money. Carmella at the time was at school, in charge of an old lady who had not much learning, but plenty of common sense and tact. This may have laid the foundation for the girl's excellent character, for I heard nothing but good of the little *vivandière*. Shortly after Carmella's brother shot himself, the old school-mistress died, and the little girl was sent to an orphan-asylum, where she forgot the little she had learned, and where she remained until she was fifteen. She then left the asylum to make her own living, and while waiting to

be employed as child's nurse, earned her bread by posing as model for artists. Unfortunately she fell in love with a fellow-model, a worthless fellow, whom she married before she was sixteen. Then her real troubles began. Her husband spent her earnings and beat her cruelly. She left him at last, and having no way to earn her living, became a *vivandière* in Garibaldi's army. Through all the vicissitudes of her sad life she remained honest and respectable.

"Annibile Faresi, Carmella's brother, it seems, had fallen into the hands of a band of sharpers, who cheated him out of everything he possessed. The name of one of the sharpers, I learned, was Caradac Ducat, the same as that borne by the French marquis I met, and of whom I told you, that fateful 17th of February in the Château de Saint-Estain. The marquis was introduced to me by Hilgersdorf as an old acquaintance from Rome. I remember everything connected with that evening at Saint-Estain so perfectly that I could not make a mistake about the name. In Hackert's opinion the marquis and Hilgersdorf were leagued together to cheat me. I heard while in Rome that the marquis was established here in Nice as a professor of gaming."

"A professor of gaming?" repeated Elimar, smiling. "I have heard of regular and irregular professors of chemistry, of numismatics, of narrative, and so on, but I never heard of a professor of gaming. What manner of trade can that be?"

"A trade practiced by a professional gambler," answered the baron, "whose experience at the green table enables him to advise would-be players. When everybody in Europe was playing *roulette*, Germany was a favorite field for these honorable gentlemen. Now, however, they confine their operations to the Rivièra, in the neighborhood of Monaco, and its temples

of Satan. Here is the last *Petit Niçois*. Look at the last page of advertisements, and you will find three—four—five—six, indeed—announcements of such professors. Here is one: ‘Any person—’” read the baron —“‘desirous of trying his luck at Monte Carlo, should first call at No. 397 Avenue Delphine, first floor left. Advice and explanation concerning *roulette* and *trente-et-quarante*.’ Here is another one: ‘A never-failing system to certain success in games of hazard will be taught for a moderate sum at No. 705 Rue du Pont Neuf, two steps right.’ A third announcement informs the public that ‘unfailing success at *roulette* will be assured to him who will apply to M. François Chautellier, No. 80 Boulevard Bonchage, *parterre*.’”

“What precious rascals these gaming professors must be!” laughingly exclaimed Elimar. “Do you imagine they ever receive applications for ‘advice’?”

“I am not exaggerating when I assure you that they drive a thriving business. Nothing incites human passions so much as gambling, nothing arouses more evil inclinations. A gambler may be educated and enlightened to a degree, but he becomes, when at the green table, a prey to superstition as childish as that which rules a savage. A passion for play dulls the intellect and creates unhealthy desires. Before the *roulette* ball was banished from Wiesbaden, I became acquainted with a distinguished scientist who was very fond of play. Nothing could induce this remarkably brilliant man to approach the gaming table in any other coat but the one from which the top button was missing. He had lost this button in the gaming hall one day, and on the same day had won an enormous sum! Another celebrated scholar with whom I am acquainted always bets on the numbers given him by his old housekeeper, a totally ignorant woman. Not

even his frequent ill-luck can convince him that the old crone does not possess what he terms 'uncommon talent for divination!'"

"Do these professors of gaming practice their theories at the green table?" after a pause inquired Waldau.

"I don't believe they do," laughingly returned Menken. They excuse their seeming want of faith in their own teachings by telling you they were 'born to ill-luck.' But to return to our worthy Marquis Caradac Ducat. I heard, as I told you, that he was in Nice, and, thanks to the efforts of Francisco, who visited every gaming professor advertising in the *Petit Niçois*, I have found him. The marquis goes by his name here, only he now separates the Ducat, and writes it 'Du Cat.' My Roman informant, by the way, told me that the Marquisate Ducat was situated somewhere on the moon. I inquired about the marquis of the proprietor of Iles Britanique, whom I have known for many years. He tells me that Ducat does not use a 'system' for *roulette*, only for *trente-et-quarante*. This is very shrewd of him. In the latter game the chances between the player and the bank are about even, while in *roulette*, the player is always at a disadvantage. Ducat does not charge for his 'system,' he demands a percentage on the winnings, which brings him a considerable income. He never risks anything, and among the hundreds who use his system, there are always some on whom chance smiles favorably."

"Do you expect to gain from this worthy professor, who exists on the stupidity of his fellow-man, any information that will benefit our cause?" inquired Elimar.

"No; I hope to make use of him in another way. You know that Frau Von Hilgersdorf and Signor Cadama have become very confidential friends of late

and I have no doubt there is a reason for this friendship. Ever since that day when Colonel Von Hackert, on French soil, proved that Hilgersdorf was a dishonest gamester, unworthy to wear his uniform, Hilgersdorf regarded the colonel with malignant hatred and spite. He was the only person beside Hackert who knew the secret of Lucia's birth, and he would not have betrayed the secret to the world at large had he not known that his reputation was in Hackert's keeping. Hackert could prove that he was a cheat, and that was the sword of Damocles beneath which Hilgersdorf trembled. He must, however, have revealed the secret to Cadama shortly before he died. At least I infer that he did from what Francisco told me—for the *signor's* operations against Lucia began about that time. Cadama's move to enlist Hilgersdorf's widow, who is Lúcia's enemy—you know why—in his cause is a shrewd one, but I hope to use the professor of gaming to frustrate any design he may have in that direction. Ducat was an intimate friend of Hilgersdorf's, and is certain to be familiar with many a 'shady' episode in the general's life."

"I question whether the worthy marquis will betray his partner—honor among thieves, you know!" observed Elimar.

"Yes, but I shall take good care to approach him in a way that will silence any scruples he may have," in a significant tone responded the baron.

"I am curious to know how you will succeed," said Waldau, rising at the same time with Menken. "When do you intend to call on him?"

"At once—though I doubt if he is at home now. His hours are before ten, mornings, and it is now eleven. I shall go, however, and if he is not at home, will find out when he is certain to be disengaged."

As they stepped into the garden they saw Herbert von Hackert, who was still sitting with the Frenchman under the orange-trees. Menken started when his eyes fell on the marquis.

"That is Du Cat," he whispered to his companion. "I am not mistaken in that painted mask and gleaming eyes. This is fortunate. We must manage to have some conversation with him."

They were now beside the table at which the marquis and Von Hackert were seated. Menken bowed to the latter, saying, as he lifted his hat :

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Herr Von Hackert. Have you been long on the Riviéra?"

"For several weeks, Herr Von Menken. Will you join us, or are you on your way out?"

Menken and Elimar drew up chairs, and the student introduced the "Marquis Du Cat."

"If I am not mistaken," in his most affable manner, observed Herr Von Menken, turning to the marquis, "I have already had the pleasure of meeting you, *monsieur*. It was so long ago—ten years—that I doubt if you remember our meeting in the Château de Saint-Estain, near Belfort."

"Ah, yes, I remember," returned the marquis, fixing his bright black eyes on the baron's face. "Those days at Saint-Estain are still fresh in my memory. At that time my old friend Hilgersdorf was quartered at the *château*. I remember how delighted I was to see him again. Hilgersdorf and I had been friends in our youth, and after more than two decades I met him again—an enemy of my country! The wild boy, for whom nothing was too extravagant, had become a brave and gallant soldier. *Sacre tonnerre!* I should not have recognized him, had it not been his old passion for the *jeu* betrayed him. Would you believe it? There, in the

midst of a rain of bombs, we amused ourselves with *trente-et-quarante* ! What a pity Count Saint-Estain and his young brother met so sad an end ! They were brave patriots and excellent men. I may confess it to-day : I too was concerned in that conspiracy to aid Bourbaki. Had I not taken to my heels when the count's balloon was caught I should not be sitting here now !”

Many pleasant memories of the past were recalled. The marquis, who was an excellent as well as an amusing talker, related twenty piquant little histories of the days when he and the deceased Hilgersdorf had made “Rome howl,” as he expressed it.

“At that time,” continued Du Cat, “Hilgersdorf was twenty-odd years. He had not yet entered the army, which he did only after he left Italy. What a wild fellow he was ! He distinguished himself chiefly during the carnival, when he committed the wildest extravagances. We were a merry crowd. I can remember the name of only one more besides Hilgersdorf—a young banker, Annibile Faresi, whose tragic end—he committed suicide—created quite a sensation in the Eternal City. We would disguise ourselves in the most ridiculous costumes, parade the streets, force our way into houses, and commit a hundred mad pranks. *Mon Dieu !* We were so young and full of life. Age, with its reason, came soon enough !”

A pleasant half-hour was passed ; then the marquis rose, begged to be excused, and, after shaking hands cordially with Herr Von Menken and hoping to meet him again very soon, lifted his hat to the rest and sauntered out of the garden.

The apartments occupied by the Marquis Du Cat were in the Rue des Ponchettes, and were furnished with an elegance and comfort seen only in the best

houses. When the marquis arrived at his apartments, he rang for his valet—a gray-haired man, who wore his “claw-hammer,” knee-breeches and silk stockings with the air of a noble of the rococo age—and with the assistance of the dignified factotum, removed his coat and donned an elegant *robe de chambre*. Then he gently mopped his brow and eyelids with cologne water, stretched himself on the lounge and closed his eyes.

To-day, however, the professor's siesta was not to be of long duration. A sharp peal of the door-bell informed him that a visitor wished to be admitted; and a few moments later Givet, the valet, came to announce that a gentleman desired to speak with *mon-sieur*.

“Very sorry,” responded Du Cat, turning on his other side, “but my hours for receiving visitors are before ten. Tell the gentleman to read the card on my door.”

“The gentleman,” timidly ventured Givet, “knows that it is after *monsieur's* hours, but he insists on being admitted. He says he has business of extreme importance with *monsieur*.”

“The devil take him and his business! What's his name? Did you ask him?”

“I did, *monsieur*. The gentleman calls himself Menken—Baron Von Menken, a German!” he concluded with a disdainful curl of his lip.

Givet was not a little astonished when his master sat suddenly upright at the mention of the “German's” name, and said:

“Ah, the baron! My clothes, Givet, and tell Monsieur Von Menken I will see him.”

Herr Von Menken was sitting in an easy-chair, smoking, when the professor entered the reception

room. He did not rise. He merely waved his hand in greeting and said carelessly :

"I dare say I disturbed your slumbers, my dear Du Cat." Then he crossed one knee over the other, flicked the ashes from his cigar, and continued : "I am sorry, for your nerves must require a good deal of rest ; but I want to see you on a matter of extreme importance. You are the same Ducat—written as one word, with a capital D—who, on the 17th of October, 1845, was sentenced by the assizes in Rome to three years' imprisonment for cheating at cards, aren't you?"

If Herr Von Menken imagined that his sudden inquiry would startle the wily old Frenchman he was mistaken. The marquis did not even change color. Perhaps, too, it would have been impossible to detect any signs of confusion beneath the stratum of enamel which covered his face. He merely smiled serenely, drew forward an easy-chair, into which he comfortably adjusted his spare frame, and said :

"Why, this is very interesting ! You seem to be familiar with my past life, *cher* baron. Were you at one time a jurist or an archæologist, that you delved among the tribunal archives of Rome ? Yes, I am the self-same Ducat, and I served my three years without a single week of grace. It was detestable ! Just fancy, my dear baron, I—the Marquis Caradac Ducat—forced to wear a blouse and trousers of coarse gray cotton and to pluck wool ! It was frightful ! It took months to make my poor hands presentable again. A veritable skin of horn had formed on the ends of my fingers. It was atrocious—perfectly atrocious !" he concluded, with angry vehemence, spreading out his slender white hands, on which no signs of prison labor were now visible.

The baron smiled. Du Cat's impudence did not in

the least offend him. On the contrary, it convinced him that the marquis was just the sort of man he required.

"I see that I may speak frankly to you, *mon cher marquis*," he said, after blowing a cloud of smoke from his lips. "I prefer to do so, and am glad that you do not, by unnecessary prudery, compel me to feign conventional politeness in addressing you. I was very glad to renew my acquaintance with you this morning, for I have been looking for you—with peaceful intentions," he added smilingly. "I had no intention of calling you to account for leaguings with your old friend, Hilgersdorf, to cheat me that evening at Saint-Estain out of nineteen thousand Prussian thalers. No, such is not my intention, *cher marquis*. I have forgotten all those old happenings, and I pledge you my word of honor that not a syllable concerning your past shall escape my lips if you grant me the slight favor I shall ask. Of course, I expect, in case you grant my request, to express my gratitude in a most substantial manner."

The tone and words were too significant for the marquis to pretend he had not understood them. Involuntarily his manner became more deferential.

"If I can do any favor for *monsieur*," he returned, with a gracious courtesy, "I am at his disposal without asking for an equivalent. Before I ask what it is you want of me, I should like to convince you that you accuse me wrongly. We are alone. I may, therefore, speak with candor: The one to blame for your losses the evening I had the honor to become acquainted with you at Saint-Estain was not myself, *monsieur le baron*, but your countryman and comrade in arms, Monsieur Hilgersdorf. I tell a great many lies—it is part of my profession—but this is the truth—the plain, unadulterated truth."

"I am sorry there are no living witnesses, Monsieur Du Cat," returned the baron. "If there were I should not need to trouble you. To be plain, I am anxious to obtain proofs of some misdemeanor committed by Hilgersdorf—"

"Surely," hastily interposed the marquis, "you don't want to call a dead man to account for the misdeeds of his life?"

"No. I merely want an effective weapon to use against his widow, who is malignantly aiding to persecute an innocent person," replied Menken, whose face had flushed slightly at the Frenchman's query.

Du Cat in time suppressed the whistle which his pursed lips were about to emit, and instead ejaculated mentally: "This fellow is a scamp like myself." Aloud he added:

"I understand, and am rejoiced that I shall be able to accommodate you. I told you I became acquainted with Hilgersdorf when he was a youth. Already then he was passionately fond of play, and," he added, with a meaning twinkle in his black eyes, "never hesitated to assist chance. At that time one of the best known gamblers in Rome was Emmanuelle Fratti, who had gathered about him a few adventurous spirits, among whom were Hilgersdorf and myself. One of the victims of this band was the young Roman I mentioned this morning, Annibile Faresi, who shot himself after we had won all his money. Unfortunately the investigation which followed his death led to the arrest of our band—all but Hilgersdorf, who managed to escape from the country. They are all dead now but Fratti and myself. Fratti still plies his old trade at Mentone. He was more intimate with Hilgersdorf than I was, and I dare say could tell of many a shady transaction in which your countryman was chief factor. As Fratti

is a friend of mine, I think I may promise you his assistance also."

Menken now rose to go.

"I am greatly indebted to you, marquis," he said earnestly, "and ask in parting that you will keep this visit and its object a secret—at least until I give you permission to speak of it. May I depend on your keeping silent?"

"Always!" solemnly responded Du Cat, bowing, and laying his right hand against the breast-pocket of his coat which contained a pack of cards—a vow that was as binding as any that could have been taken by the professor of gaming.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE GREATEST HAPPINESS.

It was one of the last days of October. The westering sun shed a crimson glow over the gently undulating surface of the blue sea, and a gentle breeze played among the cypress and olive-trees, which murmured an accompaniment to the soft, rustling sound of the waves breaking on the shore.

Counselor Dreyfuss, with the latest number of the *Illustrated Journal* in his hand, reclined in a comfortable American rocking-chair on the veranda of the stately villa which he had leased for their sojourn on Rivièra.

Herr Dreyfuss was not reading, although he held the newspaper as if he were intent upon its columns. His glance rested alternately on Lucia von Hackert and Frau Annie Doring, who were promenading in the shady garden, and his wife, who was sitting with Frau Von Sporken on the veranda, industriously knitting at a stocking of considerable length and width. Frau Therese's glance now and then followed that of her husband when it wandered toward the two young women in the garden, and a satisfied gleam shone in her eyes every time they rested on the plump form of the little Frau Annie. To Frau Therese the presence of her

niece in the Italian villa was a great comfort as well as a pleasure. Had it not been for Annie the worthy dame would have been quite at a loss how to manage the affairs of her household in this strange land, where oil instead of butter was used in cooking, and the cooks were men instead of women as they should be.

"I never look at Annie but I wonder at the great change in the child," observed the counselor, as his eyes wandered again toward his favorite. "She used to be so serious and quiet, and now she is as lively and merry as a cricket. Marriage has changed her whole nature. Just let any one say to me that we men do not exercise a beneficial influence over a woman's disposition!" he concluded, winking roguishly at his wife whose knitting needles were clicking musically.

"Humph!" she retorted, without looking up from her flying fingers. "You seem to forget that we had a deal of trouble to induce you to look favorably on Annie's marriage. Had you been allowed to have your way the dear child would now be sitting silent and sad at home in Berlin—"

"There—there!" hastily interposed the counselor. "Don't be stirring up unpleasant memories! Every one is liable to make one or more mistakes in his lifetime. I thought I was acting for the child's good. Let the matter rest now. Besides, my dear, your retort by no means refutes my axiom, which, by the way, reminds me to ask you, Frau Von Sporken, if you have ever thought of a marriage for our Lucia?"

Frau Von Sporken smiled and replied :

"So direct a question requires an equally candid reply. I have thought of it, counselor. I have observed lately that Lucia indulges in 'moods.' She used to be so frank and open-hearted, used to tell me everything. But for weeks she has been reserved and silent, and I

have thought, perhaps—nay, I hoped it might be a sign that a deeper affection had taken possession of her heart.”

“I hope so—I hope so,” heartily assented Herr Dreyfuss. “I, too, have had my suspicions. Yes, you may look at me in surprise. I have seen, too, that young Waldau is head over ears in love with our little Lux. I don’t know any one I would rather see her marry than our young friend Waldau.”

While this discussion was in progress on the veranda, the younger members of the family in the garden were also engaged in a conversation, the subject of which was the ever-youthful god Cupid.

“Indeed, my dear Lux,” exclaimed Annie, laying her arm around the slender waist of her friend, “I cannot tell you how happy I am! Now that my dear uncle has forgiven me for running away with Hans, I cannot imagine anything else that could add to my happiness. It is perfect.”

Lucia gazed at the fleecy clouds which were floating in the western sky. A sorrowful expression lingered around her delicate lips and in her dark eyes.

“What is the greatest happiness one can experience?” she asked in a tone so low that it seemed more as if she were communing with herself. “Is it really to love? Does the forgetfulness of self, the entire yielding of one’s heart to another bring content and happiness? Or is it only another fancy, like so much else in this life?”

“No, no, my little skeptic,” returned the young wife. “True love is not a product of the fancy. It comes from the heart. As the sun warms and irradiates the earth, so does true love warm and brighten the human existence. Just think how wretched it must be to live for oneself alone—to lock in one’s own breast all joy and sorrow! All sophistry, all the philosophy in the

world cannot weaken the eternal truth that the greatest happiness on earth is to love."

Lucia made no reply, but bent her head on her breast, as if to read for herself, in the shining pebbles at her feet, the confirmation of Annie's enthusiastic assertion. She was not sorry to hear Frau Therese's voice at that moment summon Annie to the veranda. She wanted to be alone.

When Annie was gone, the young girl sauntered slowly along the path toward the pavilion, which crowned the slight elevation at the foot of the garden. From this spot one could look over the sea, far out to where a pale-blue line marked the rocky coast of Corsica.

Lucia seated herself on the rustic bench and traced hieroglyphics with the point of her parasol in the sand. Her thoughts wandered from the shore of the blue sea to a certain romantic valley among the Swiss mountains. How often had she thought of that summer-day when, amid the Alpine storm, a heart had been offered to her! How often thought of her cruel words! No, she had not been cruel, only candid. She would have been untruthful had she spoken differently, and no untruth had ever crossed her lips. From the first hour of their meeting she had admired and sympathized with Elimar Waldau; and now—now that she knew he had turned from his former frivolous life, that he devoted himself with a lasting energy and ambition to his noble work—now she felt that she might with pride and gladness acknowledge her love for him.

Yes, she loved him. She need no longer hide the secret in her breast. She loved him, loved his wonderful talent, his pure heart and generous nature. Yes, yes, Annie Doring was right: To love is the greatest happiness!



## CHAPTER XXII.

### COUNTER-MINING.

Signor Cadama was on his way to Bordighèra, where he expected to meet Francisco Boccani. He occupied a seat at the open window of a first-class carriage, from which he blew the smoke of his cigarette into the air.

The *signor's* exterior was that of a man contented with himself and all the world. But it was a very deceptive exterior. He was a very discontented man. Matters progressed too slowly to suit him ; his position was becoming excessively wearisome. Besides, there were too many confederates in the plot ; he saw that now it was too late. But these hangers-on should not trouble him much longer. The engine shrieked, the train came to a halt and Cadama alighted to find Francisco awaiting him. The two walked arm-in-arm toward Café Sapia, which is near the station.

"Well?" with a rising inflection, briefly observed Cadama when they were seated at a table.

Francisco understood the query. He thrust his hand into his breast pocket and drew forth a folded paper, which he laid on the table in front of him.

"Favor for favor, *signor*," he said, keeping his hand on the document. "I have accomplished the task you

gave me and have pilfered from my master the document you seem to value so highly. But I do not intend to give it to you until I have received an equivalent."

"What are the contents of the paper?" asked Cadama, fixing a keen glance on the lad's face.

"It relates to the legal adoption of my sister, Lucia, by Baron Von Hackert-Selchern, executed in Berlin on the second day of October, 1860." Cadama grew pale with excitement. Involuntarily his hand extended toward the document, but Francisco drew it back. "Pardon, *signor*," he interposed. "You must allow me to be as cautious as yourself."

The attorney suppressed an oath.

"I only wanted to convince myself that you are speaking the truth," he said quietly, but his eyes gleamed ominously. "Do you imagine I would buy a cat in a bag?"

"For that I think you too cunning, *signor*. I will read the paper to you, and you may look on and convince yourself that it is genuine."

Francisco unfolded the document, held it so that Cadama could see it, and began in a low tone to read.

For several moments after Francisco had concluded, the *signor* was silent. Then he said:

"What do you want in exchange for this paper?"

"Nothing but the attestation I gave you in Rome—the paper in which I falsely declare myself a thief."

"You are insolent, Francisco," returned Cadama, with a darkening face. "Suppose I should summon you *gendarme* over yonder? It would be serving you right."

"I question that, *signor*. Moreover, I am quite certain you will not carry out your threat. Were you to do so, you would lose all chance of getting possession of this paper. But why need we quarrel? This is a

barter—nothing more. If you are not satisfied with my conditions—*va bene*."

He made as if he would return the paper to his pocket, but Cadama laid a restraining hand on his arm :

"Hold !" he exclaimed. "Why act a comedy ? Here," taking a paper from his letter-case and handing it to Francisco. "Here is the attestation ; now give me the document."

Francisco carefully examined the paper ; then he pushed the document across the table.

"Now we are quits, *signor*. Henceforce I am free to work for or against you !"

Cadama started. There was a threat in the lad's tone.

"You will work against me, of course ?" he observed, resting his piercing eyes on Francisco's face.

"On the contrary, *signor*. I should be a fool to turn against you now, when we can work together as equals. I expect to share the proceeds which will result if your plans succeed."

A sneering smile crossed Cadama's lips.

"I think you forget, my boy, the conversation we had in Berlin, when you begged me not to annoy you with offers of money."

"At that time this attestation was still in your possession," coolly retorted Francisco. "Matters are different to-day. Hereafter I expect to be well paid for my labor."

Cadama stroked his beard, then slowly emptied his glass of vermouth :

"I confess, my dear boy," he said in his usual tone, "that I would prefer to keep you in my service. Of course, I do not expect you to work for nothing. I shall reward you handsomely. One thing, however, I want to impress on your mind. You are mistaken if

you imagine that because I have given you that attestation you have escaped my power. You forget that I still have the stolen coins found in your pocket the night of the burglary at the Palazzo Borghese. Don't you suppose *my* word would count against anything you might say were I to accuse you of stealing them? As well as the valuable document you have pilfered from Baron Von Menken. I have no intention of doing so, my lad. I merely want you to know that you are not so free as you imagine, and that it will be to your advantage to remain my friend and assistant. But enough of this. I have something more to say to you. You can earn a good round sum immediately, my dear Cecco, by helping me in a matter that has nothing to do with restoring to Herr Von Hackert the fortune illegally held by another. I am anxious to secure an uninterrupted interview with Lucia; and as I cannot call on her at San Remo, where she is guarded by a family of dragons, I must accomplish my desire by stealth. We must manage to lure the girl to the garden of the Hilgersdorf villa, where I occupy apartments in the pavilion, and where I can talk with her without fear of interruption. During the interview I want you to wait in the adjoining room, where you can hear every word, and be ready to join me at a given signal. I need not tell you what I propose to say to Lucia; you will hear it in the pavilion. So soon as a favorable opportunity offers I shall find a way to bring the girl to Frau Von Hilgersdorf's garden."

Francisco deliberated a moment, then said in the tone of submission he was accustomed to use when addressing the *signor* :

"I don't think you will have to wait long for an opportunity. I shall be at liberty to help you the first half of next week, when the baron and Herr Wal-

dau expect to go to Cannes. I am to remain in Nice."

"Chance favors us once more!" with animation exclaimed the *signor*. "That intriguing baron and his Pylades, the artist, are the only persons I fear."

He summoned the waiter, paid his bill, then looking at his watch added :

"It is twelve o'clock, and the train will be here in a few minutes. I must go to Monaco where Herr Von Hackert is expecting me. By heaven! I am getting tired wasting my savings on that worthless fellow!"

Francisco and the *signor* walked together back to the railway station, but entered separate carriages in order to avoid attracting attention.

A short time afterward, while Cadama and Herr Von Hackert were discussing another loan, Francisco related to Herr Von Menken his conversation with the *signor*.

"The scoundrel," he concluded, "is not so clever as I thought him. He really believes the document all that it should be. I dare say he thinks it genuine because I pretended I would not give it to him, and he believes, too, that I am still afraid of his power, that I am still a marionette that will dance whenever he chooses to pull the string. I believe, baron, that the *signor* intends a grand *coup* in arranging an interview with Lucia, and think that now, more than ever, is the time for us to be on our guard."

Menken nodded his head. There was an expression of deep gloom on his face.

"Yes; the secret of Lucia's birth cannot remain a secret much longer. We shall have to allow Cadama to carry out his design in order to entrap him. Of course you will obey when he summons you to the pavilion; but there will be some listeners on whom he

does not count. I shall be there with two stout *gendarmes*. You may go now, and take a look at Monaco, my boy, but keep away from the green table! Before you go, run over to the Hotel de Russie and ask if any letters have been forwarded from Nice for me or Herr Waldau."

The lad hastened to obey, and the baron returned to Elimar Waldau, who was waiting for him at one of the tables in front of the Grand Café de Paris.

"The end of the drama is near," observed Herr Von Menken seating himself, "and the question is, will the conclusion satisfy us?"

He proceeded to relate what he had heard from Francisco, adding:

"Lucia will very soon learn that she has no right to the name of Hackert-Selchern."

"Poor girl, my heart bleeds for her," murmured Elimar compassionately.

"Yes, it is a great pity that she should not be allowed to continue believing herself the daughter of that noble old soldier," assented Menken. "However, since I have learned what an excellent woman Carmella Boccani was, I have not feared so much for Lucia. She will suffer at first—that is but natural—but when she remembers that she need not be ashamed of her unfortunate mother, I think she will accept her position, as only a warm-hearted, generous nature could accept it."

"And Francisco?" inquired Waldau. "Don't you think it will be trying for Lucia to know that her brother occupies a menial position?"

Menken's brow became deeply wrinkled.

"When it becomes known that Lucia is not Colonel Von Hackert's daughter, Francisco ceases to be my servant and becomes my friend and equal. He has

expressed a desire to go to America, and I shall take good care that he finds in his new home a comfortable situation."

Elimar was deeply moved. Menken had thought of everything. The young artist's heart was filled with remorse and shame when he remembered that he had once doubted this man, whose unselfish friendship for Lucia stood higher, seemed nobler, than his own love for her. Involuntarily he held out his hand; but Menken turned abruptly, almost rudely, from the mute exhibition of gratitude and admiration.

At this moment Francisco came toward them with a letter. It was for Herr Waldau, whose cheeks flushed with anger as he read the contents.

"Jealousy and envy—pure envy!" he exclaimed passionately, flinging the letter on the table. "The secretary of the art exhibition writes that a number of artists have protested against my receiving a prize for my '*Kerkerwonne*.' He adds that I need not fear the decision of the committee. But isn't it infamous? Nothing like it ever happened before in the history of the art exhibition! Of course, that fellow Rahlou is to blame for it. Rahlou, whose blood and ink were poisoned by the well-deserved punishment he received from me in the Café Bauer last winter."

"I dare say Rahlou is at the bottom of it," quietly observed the baron, rising; "but I see no necessity for getting so angry at such a trifle. Genius and talent will make a way for themselves no matter what the obstructions—and you have both. Come, let us go into the gaming-hall! In laughing at the weakness of others, we will banish our own gloom and anger."

Among the players gathered around the *trente-et-quarante* table was Herbert Von Hackert, his face pale and worn, his eyes fixed gloomily on the game. With

an automatic movement the banker flung the cards on the table, his "*Perd!*" and "*Gagne!*" falling with monotonous regularity from his lips, as the gold coins clinked musically under the croupier's rake.

Hackert tossed both the gold pieces he held in his hand on *rouge*; at the same moment the tall man, who had been watching him, turned away, smiling and shaking his head. In turning, his eyes fell on Signor Cadama, who was standing a little apart, also watching the game.

A half-startled, half-glad expression came into the tall man's face:

"*Excusez,*" he murmured apologetically, as he pushed his way along through the crowd toward the *signor*.

"My dear Cadama! Is this really you?" he exclaimed in a familiar tone, either not noticing or appearing not to notice the unpleasant surprise depicted on the Italian's face. "What a place is this temple of evil passions to meet old friends and recall long-forgotten memories! How long is it since our last meeting? It was in Rome—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Cadama, impatiently waving his hand. "It was in Rome. You seem to have prospered, Monsieur Du Cat. What are you doing now if I may inquire?"

Without speaking the marquis pointed to the gaming-table, then tapped his forefinger against his brow.

Cadama smiled:

"Ah," he returned, with a look of intelligence. "You are at the old trade, are you? It must be a lucrative one."

"I make enough to support myself, *signor*. It is a more certain trade, at all events, than the 'agency' business in which I was engaged in Rome."

"And which eventually forced you to quit the Eternal

City for a residence on French territory !” mockingly supplemented Cadama.

“Very true, my dear fellow, I have not forgotten that you are the cause of my quitting Rome *sans adieu*. You must let me thank you for—”

“Consider the obligation canceled, *cher marquis*,” hastily interposed Cadama. “It was merely a return for the favor you did for me. We are even !”

“Pardon, *signor*—not quite. You forget that you broke our agreement when you failed to lend me your aid in that famous, or rather infamous, burglary-comedy in the Palazzo-Borghese. I have often thought, since then, that you took that way to get rid of me.”

Cadama was about to reply, when Hackert approached.

“What, you still here, Cadama ; and you are acquainted with the marquis ? That, however, is not surprising, for Du Cat seems to be acquainted with all the world. I congratulate you, marquis, your ‘system’ is an admirable one—for the banker ! I have sacrificed my last hundred francs, and am burned out—like an extinguished candle !”

“For an intemperate and injudicious player my system certainly is of no benefit,” laconically observed Du Cat. “You know well enough that cold-blooded composure is the first requirement of every player, and you, baron, exhibited anything but composure or discretion to-day. My advice has brought you luck more than once. If you will heed it now you will play no more to-day. You are excited and will surely continue to lose.”

“Oh ! Do you really think I should ?” exclaimed the student, with a swaggering air. “I am a German, my good marquis, and we Germans have always understood how to command our nerves. I admit that I be-

came a trifle excited when *rouge* lost ten consecutive times. But I am perfectly cool again, and with golden aid from my friend Cadama, am ready to resume the battle with my sworn enemy, 'hazard.' " He turned to the *signor*, and added briefly: "I want three thousand francs."

"With great pleasure," responded Cadama, smiling in a peculiar manner. "But I should prefer to hand over the sum 'under four eyes,' so to speak."

"And my eyes are just two too many," laughingly supplemented the marquis. He bowed and turned back to the table. Cadama and the student betook themselves to the veranda.

"Before we proceed to business, let us light a cigarette," suggested the latter, striking a match against the gilded balustrade. "That is an evil regulation in the gaming-hall, which forbids one from soothing the nerves with tobacco smoke. Well, what have you to say to me 'under four eyes,' *signor*? Go ahead, only don't lecture. I am not in the mood for that sort of thing just now—"

"Or ever," calmly interposed the *signor*. "It is useless to waste breath in talking seriously to you. What I have to say is merely a matter of business. Your credit with me has reached its end. I will give you one thousand francs, and not another centime. Moreover, you will have to live on that sum for the next two months or—starve!"

The smile vanished suddenly from Hackert's countenance.

"You are jesting, of course, my dear Cadama," he responded, with affected carelessness. "Or," with a sudden angry flash in his eyes, "isn't the interest I pay you high enough?"

"The interest you pay me?" ironically repeated the

attorney. "I have in my pocket at this moment your notes for one hundred and thirty thousand marks, but these notes are—in a business sense—not worth the paper on which they are written."

"Not at the present time," Hackert made haste to reply, "but it will be different in a few weeks. You know—better than I—how large is the fortune which must eventually come into my hands, and will not my signature to those notes compel me to pay you every *centime*?"

"Certainly, *if* you come into possession of the fortune," responded the attorney, in a peculiar tone. "But suppose our calculations and our plans should turn out to be all wrong? Suppose we should learn that Lucia had, after all, been legally adopted by your uncle?"

Hackert grew deathly pale. He leaned against the balustrade and stared at Cadama as if he saw before him a ghastly and threatening specter.

"Are you dealing in hypotheses merely to frighten me, *signor*; or—by heaven!" he exclaimed, suddenly seizing and clutching in an iron grasp the attorney's right arm. "What do you mean—are you jesting or in earnest?"

"Gently, gently, baron," returned Cadama, releasing his arm from the student's grasp. "Marquis Du Cat was right; you are intensely excited. I am not altogether in earnest. I should hardly consent to advance you another thousand francs if I were—but neither am I jesting. The fact is that we escaped total destruction by a single hair. The fortune almost escaped us—almost, I say. I took good care to prevent such a catastrophe in good time."

Hackert breathed more freely; the fresh color came back to his face,

"Then you were jesting when you said you would not lend me any more money after to-day?" he said, in his usual tone.

"No; I was in earnest about that—for which you have to thank your unpardonable extravagance. I have given you all my spare cash, and can offer you no more than the sum mentioned—one thousand francs. With that sum you can live quite comfortably in Nice for the next two months—if you are economical. In eight weeks, at the furthest, we shall have reached our goal."

Hackert laughed irritably.

"You said the same eight weeks ago. I don't believe you. Moreover, I cannot live on five hundred francs a month. I can't live like a beggar, and don't mean to try it. If you haven't any more money of your own, then borrow some; there are a hundred sources for you—for me not one."

"I decline to borrow money to lend to you, baron. I am very sorry I do not own a gold mine—"

"And I am tired being led around by the nose!" furiously interrupted the student, flinging his half-burned cigarette among the promenaders on the pavement below. "If you wish to be rid of your case, well and good. I shall transfer it to a Berlin lawyer, who will, perhaps, assist me with a better grace than do you."

Cadama started. The student's thrust had struck home. He must not let this shallow youth escape him, at least not until his later plan promised success.

"I can only reply to your threat—it is a threat, I presume—" he said, quietly, "by saying that if you wish to transfer your case to a Berlin lawyer, you must not forget to supply him with sufficient proof, else he might refuse to undertake it. But let us drop these little

differences, which lead to nothing. Were you to value money at its true worth, were you to look at life a little more seriously, such bickering would be unnecessary. Why in the world do you take so much pleasure in enriching the heirs of Monsieur Blanc? If you will promise on your honor not to play any more, I will make the loan two thousand francs instead of one."

Hackert bit the ends of his mustache and stared gloomily at the crowd below him. Cadama asked what was impossible.

"I should be acting dishonorably," he said at last, "were I to give you that promise. I could not keep it. There is one thing, though, that I can and will promise. If you will give me two thousand francs, I will not trouble you again for eight weeks. What I do with the money need not concern you."

With a sigh that was intended to express resignation to what could not be helped, Cadama replied :

"You are incorrigible, baron. Nothing remains for me to do but grant your request, unwilling as I am to do so. Yes, you are incorrigible !"

"Say, rather, too good for this wicked world," retorted the student, laughing, and taking the proffered bank-notes without a word of thanks. "And now, most worthy *signor*, tell me—is this Monsieur Du Cat to be trusted, or is he a rogue of the ordinary stamp?"

Cadama deliberated a moment before replying.

"I don't think he is what might be called strictly honest; but he certainly is not a swindler of the ordinary stamp. I think you may safely rely on his advice concerning gaming."

When Herr Von Hackert and Signor Cadama returned to the gaming-hall, the crowds around the tables had thinned somewhat. It was the hour for *déjeuner*, and only the most zealous players yet lingered.

"Oh, here you are again, *messieurs* !" exclaimed the Marquis Du Cat, who was standing, note-book in hand, in a window recess. "I have been waiting for you. Shall we breakfast together at the Frères Provenceaux?"

"Thanks, *I* haven't time," returned the student. "The tables are not so crowded now. I want to see if I cannot recover my losses."

"Without the aid of my system?" jestingly inquired Du Cat.

"The devil take your system!" rudely returned the student, hurrying toward the nearest table.

"If you could rid me entirely, and for all time, of that young coxcomb," said Cadama in a low tone to the marquis, "I should not pass the word with you about a thousand francs! I dare say you are still an 'agent' *pour tout*, my dear Caradac, and will still attend to a little 'business' that does not altogether belong to the province of a gaming professor?"

The French adventurer's features did not change beneath the *signor's* meaning glance and question. He stroked his mustache, so that his hand should deaden his tones, and replied with a touch of dignity:

"I have ceased to meddle with business of questionable character, *signor*, and I certainly have no desire to enter into any negotiations with you again, after the way you cheated me in that affair of the coin-burglary."

Cadama's face expressed surprise. He certainly had not expected such a rebuff after Du Cat's cordial invitation to breakfast. Before he could reply, the marquis turned on his heel and walked toward Baron Von Menken, who at that moment entered the hall with Herr Waldau.

"Cursed Frenchman!" muttered Cadama, under his breath, as he stepped behind the damask curtains which

draped the recess. "The knave is acquainted with the German baron—is actually shaking hands with him and with the artist too! Where and when did they become acquainted, I wonder?"

Baron Von Menken at that moment asked almost the same question of the marquis.

"I see you know Signor Cadama, marquis! Where did you become acquainted with him? At the green table, I presume?"

The professor of gaming shook his head.

"Cadama never plays," he replied "He is too cowardly, and fears to trust chance. If you are interested in the *signor* and want to learn anything about *his* past, I think I can give you all the information you want!" he concluded with a significant glance.

Menken was unable to repress the sudden start caused by the words of the marquis.

"Thanks, *monsieur*! I *do* want some information concerning the *signor's* past," he said quietly, although his brain was in a whirl. "May I ask you to breakfast with me at the Hotel de Russie?"

"I was on my way to breakfast there," returned the "professor," bowing. "The oysters at the Frères Provenceaux are luscious and the wines superb."

A few minutes later the three men were seated at a table in a private room of the restaurant of the Russian Hotel. After the waiter had served an appetizing breakfast and betaken himself from the room, Herr Von Menken took a small note-book from his pocket, and said:

"You can begin now, marquis."

"Begin what?" inquired Du Cat.

"The information concerning Signor Cadama's past life."

The marquis became embarrassed. He hastily

emptied his champagne glass and glanced meaningly toward Elimar.

"You may speak without fear," said Menken, understanding the glance. "Monsieur Waldau is my best friend, and has the same interest in Cadama that I have."

The marquis bowed and said, apologetically :

"I hope Monsieur Waldau will not be offended because I hesitated to speak before him. It is all right, of course, if he is your friend, Monsieur Von Menken. Three years ago—perhaps not quite so long—I was obliged to leave Paris suddenly—not through any fault of mine, I assure you ; but a police-spy never stops to inquire whether you are guilty or innocent ! I went to Rome, where I expected to remain until the absurd affair which had driven me from Paris would be forgotten. I had been in Rome just one day when I met, while promenading on the Corso, my old friend Principe Oreste Chiavoni. The prince—between ourselves, *messieurs*—is like so many scions of noble and illustrious families ; he has degenerated sadly ! When I met him he told me he had unfortunately left his pocketbook in another pair of trousers—confidentially, he owned but one pair !—and in a voice that Cæsar might have adopted when addressing the senate, asked me for fifty lires to pay for a breakfast. I went with him to the restaurant, and when we were seated before our caviare and chablis, he unfolded a scheme that would bring us a deal of money if properly conducted. His scheme was for us to open a sort of commission agency—a bureau of information and intelligence, using his illustrious name as an attraction. Such a business could not fail to become remunerative, if conducted by persons of skill and intelligence—requirements which we two surely might boast.

"To be brief. The 'Bureau of Accommodation,' under the prestige of Principe Oreste Chiavoni, became so flourishing an institution that the police thought it necessary to keep a strict watch over our methods. But vigilant as were the spies, nothing illegal could be detected until Signor Cadama became a patron of our 'agency.' Cadama brought us trouble. The cunning *avvocato's* commission was of a rather shady nature, but we undertook it. It was to throw suspicion on a youth whom Cadama desired to get into his power. I was not willing to go quite to the length desired by Cadama, so I left all the arrangements to the prince. Just then a little band, every member bearing a name familiar in the rogues' chronicle of the Eternal City, had planned to rob the coin-cabinet in the Palazzo Borghese, and the prince took that opportunity to execute Cadama's commission. The lad in question was induced to come at night to the Palazzo, and while he was waiting in the porch, one of the thieves managed adroitly to slip a few of the stolen coins into the boy's pocket. The thieves escaped, but the innocent youth was seized, flung into a carriage and taken somewhere. I know not what became of him. I only know that the person who arrested him was Cadama. The following morning I had some business in the Trastevere, and after several hour's absence, returned to find our office in the possession of the police, who were unceremoniously examining our books and papers. My conscience was not an evil one, but I did not care just then to be interviewed by the guardians of public safety. So I made my way at a brisk pace to Signor Cadama's lodgings, supposing that I should learn from him why the police had taken possession of our agency. Cadama met me with a serene countenance. He advised me to leave Rome as soon as possible. He had heard that I, as

well as the prince, was to be arrested as receiver of stolen goods !

"In my haste to escape, I neglected to punish the knave for getting me into such a scrape. I have never ceased to regret that I did not break his neck. Several days afterward I read in a newspaper that two of the thieves who had stolen the coins from the palace and an accomplice had been arrested and sent to prison for a term of years. The accomplice was Chiavoni."

The marquis paused long enough to drink another glass of wine before concluding :

"That, *messieurs*, is perhaps one of the least harmful of the worthy Signor Cadama's exploits."

"Strange," observed Waldau, as he and Menken quitted the restaurant, "that a fellow like this marquis, who admits that he is a rogue and a cheat, should be allowed to mingle with respectable people."

"You will find this curious admixture of the social elements in all gaming resorts," responded the baron. "For us the old sinner has an incalculable value! Have you any idea what the name of the lad is whom Cadama entrapped by his clever trick?"

"Not the slightest," unsuspectingly returned the artist.

"Francisco Boccani !"





## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE DECISIVE HOUR.

Several days after the meeting between Baron Von Menken and the Marquis du Cat at Monte Carlo, Lucia von Hackert received a note that was handed to her by one of Frau Von Hilgersdorf's servants.

In addition to the superscription, were the words :

“To be opened only by the person to whom addressed.”

The note read as follows :

“GRACIOUS MISS : Pardon one who is almost unknown to you for daring to ask for an interview. By chance I have learned a secret that is of the greatest importance to you. It relates to the hints which were mentioned in a certain article in the newspaper some time ago. I do not call on you because I wish to avoid attracting attention. If you will honor me with a quarter of an hour of your time in the pavilion at the Hilgersdorf Villa, I fancy you will not regret your trouble. The little lattice-door which opens from the garden on the seashore will admit you unnoticed by any one, except

“Your obedient servant,

“GIULIO CADAMA.”

For several minutes Lucia was uncertain whether she ought to show the note to Herr Dreyfuss or keep it a secret. She remembered the disagreeable impression the writer had made on her that evening at Frau

Von Hilgersdorf's reception. Since then she had frequently met the widow's "Italian teacher" and present "courier" on the street, and familiarity with his appearance had weakened her aversion. She was now no longer afraid of him, and although she disliked the idea of meeting him secretly, her desire to solve the mystery which puzzled her was so great that she concluded to defy convention, and without telling the counselor or Frau Von Sporken, meet the *signor* at the pavilion as he suggested. An excuse which would satisfy Frau Von Sporken was soon found, and Lucia set out alone on her way to the Hilgersdorf Villa. The sun was setting when she opened the lattice-gate, mentioned by Cadama, and entered the shadowy garden. She was startled to see coming toward her from the shrubbery the form of a man, but an assuring voice calmed her alarm.

"Do not be afraid, *signorina*," said Cadama in a low tone. "I waited here to conduct you the shortest way to the pavilion."

The room into which the *signor* conducted Lucia was small, but comfortably furnished. A thick carpet covered the floor, and artistic ornaments were scattered about.

The attorney gallantly rolled forward an easy-chair, but Lucia declined his invitation to be seated, and said:

"I am not tired, thank you, *signor*. I shall stop only long enough to hear what you have to say to me."

Cadama leaned against the tall back of the chair and cast his eyes, as if in embarrassment, on the floor.

"What I have to tell you, *signorina*, is a very serious matter, indeed," he said, in a low, hesitating tone.

Lucia's face paled; she shivered slightly.

"Whatever you have to tell, *signor*," she returned, forcing herself to speak calmly, "I wish to hear it.

Pray, do not hesitate ; I am strong enough to hear the most painful truths."

Cadama bowed deferentially.

"I believe it, *signorina*, and admire your heroism. Truly, you deserve to be a scion of the brave German knights whose name you bear."

"My father was a soldier !" with proud simplicity responded Lucia, who had not detected the hidden meaning of the *signor's* words. "And I am his only child."

For an instant the attorney let his piercing eyes rest in silence on the young girl's face ; then, feigning deepest compassion, said :

"No one could wish that more than I, *signorina* ; but alas, such is not the case !"

Lucia started violently ; her pale face crimsoned ; her eyes flashed ominously.

"*Signor !*" she exclaimed haughtily. "How dare you speak thus to me ? Did you lure me here to insult me ?"

"*Signorina*," hastily interposed Cadama, "I beg you to listen quietly to me. You said only a moment ago that you were strong enough to hear even painful truths. What I have to tell you is painful, very painful, indeed ; and it is the truth—I swear it ! You are not the daughter of Colonel Von Hackert-Selchern !"

That she was to hear something very disagreeable—that she was to learn of some crime committed by a member of her family, Lucia felt in every fiber of her quivering frame, but the knowledge of the most heinous transgression could not have affected her so terribly as this revelation. Not the daughter of the man whom she had adored and revered as her father ! Whose very memory was dearer to her than life ! She had expected anything—everything but this. A rush-

ing sound filled her ears ; her strength deserted her ; she sank, with a low cry of anguish, into the eash-chair she had refused to occupy. When she recovered consciousness she found that her chair had been moved to the open window and a travelling rug thrown over her. She did not know at first where she was or what had happened. Suddenly she remembered. She flung off the rug as if it were a repulsive reptile, and sat upright. She was yet too weak to rise to her feet.

Signor Cadama was seated opposite her, anxiously watching her.

"Pray, *signorina*," he said in a gentle tone, "pray remain quiet a few moments longer. You are still very much agitated. I cannot tell you how much it grieves me to cause you such sorrow. You wanted to hear the truth, you—"

"Yes, yes," she interrupted hastily. "I want to hear the truth. I am better already. It was only the great surprise that made me faint for a moment. Pray go on and tell me all that you know about me?"

"I will tell you on one condition, *signorina*," replied the *signor*, rising, as Lucia, with evident difficulty, rose to her feet, "and that is, that you remain seated. You are still very weak, in spite of your assertion to the contrary," he added with a smile.

Lucia hesitated an instant, then resumed her seat. She was deathly pale, and trembled in every limb.

The *signor* seated himself again, and began his recital. It was the same story he had related to Herbert von Hackert and Frau Von Hilgersdorf. Lucia listened to him in silence, breathing heavily and with difficulty. Her face was pallid ; her slender frame shivered from time to time, as with an ague. It was with difficulty she forced words from her colorless lips when the *signor* concluded his recital.

"Herr Von Hilgersdorf," she said, "is dead, also the woman you say was my mother, consequently there is no one but yourself to verify the truth of this astonishing tale."

It was not an inquiry; but the attorney opened his letter-case, took from it a yellowed paper with faded writing.

"I assisted Frau Von Hilgersdorf to arrange her deceased husband's papers," he said in a business-like tone, "and found among them this document. It contains only a few lines, but they are of great importance. Allow me to read them to you, *signorina*."

He cast one swift glance at the girl's pallid face, then unfolded the document and read :

"Given on the 17th day of March, 1859, in B——, Canton Tessin, in the presence of Lieutenant Bodo Von Hilgersdorf. I, the undersigned, do hereby declare in the presence of the above-mentioned witness, that the daughter, born yesterday to Baron Karl von Hackert-Selchern and Anna Maria, his wife, died one hour after her birth. And I declare further that the dead infant was exchanged for the living child of Carmella Boccani, *vivandière* in Menotti Garibaldi's army, said living child to be reared by Baron Karl von Hackert-Selchern and known to the world as his daughter. To this declaration I append my name and seal.

"GIULIO CADAMA, *Dr. Jur.*"

"When I beheld these lines again, *signorina*," continued the attorney, folding his paper and returning it to the letter-case; "I remembered at once that I had in my possession a similar document, which I had entirely forgotten. Although I, as well as Hilgersdorf, promised to keep the exchange of infants a secret, we felt it our duty, in case any legal question should ever arise concerning the matter, to prepare a document that could be used to prove the truth of the exchange we had chanced to witness. As I was already at that time a licensed jurist, any such verification would, of

course, be perfectly valid in any court of law. I had forgotten all about the matter, when I received one day a letter from Baron Herbert von Hackert, asking me to come to Berlin. He desired me to undertake an important case for him. Frau Von Hilgersdorf—who seems to have a grudge against you, *signorina*—must have learned from her husband that you are not Colonel Von Hackert's daughter. At least, she told the student so, and he—as is natural—at once determined to gain possession of the fortune illegally held by yourself. I was surprised to learn that Colonel Von Hackert had not legally adopted you—a neglect that certainly justifies my client in bringing suit against you. The reason for such a neglect must have been that the colonel did not want the world to know that you were not really his daughter. That Herbert von Hackert has not yet begun his suit is owing to me, *signorina*. I could not endure the thought of compromising you."

Here the *signor* paused to observe the effect of his words. He had made a mistake if he expected that his disclosure would crush his victim. Pale as before, Lucia sat confronting him, her features perfectly composed. Only her dark eyes gleamed with a peculiar light that compelled the *signor's* glance to drop beneath it.

"I presume I ought to express gratitude for your consideration, *signor*," she said calmly. "I don't know, though, why you should try to spare me? As for your client's suit, you are at liberty to begin it as soon as he wishes. I shall know how to meet your accusations."

Cadama was astounded. Was this a weak, tender maiden, a half-child, with delicately organized nervous system? The attorney was at a loss how to read this enigmatic girl-nature. Strangely moved, the *signor* rose. Two crimson spots glowed on his thin cheeks.

“Your retort might satisfy me, *signorina*, were I merely a matter-of-fact man of business whose heart has become petrified amid the legal dust of his office. But such is not the case. My heart still lives and pulsates with tender compassion. Have you considered the consequences of such a suit? Don't think only of the financial loss you will be forced to endure—remember what the world will say! Remember the scurrilous tongues of society. Think of the doors that will close against you the moment your true origin becomes known. You will be scorned, insulted; your former friends will find a hundred lies to besmirch the reputation of the noble man who was in truth a father to you. You are proud, but your pride is not strong enough to endure all this, *signorina*. Pride breaks when it has to face calumny and poverty leagued together. Pride will fail you when you find yourself alone, forsaken, disgraced!”

There was deep pathos and compassionate pity in Cadama's tone and manner; but Lucia remained unmoved. Her voice was as firm as before when she replied:

“There is a pride, *signor*, that nothing can break—a pride that can bear anything—everything. Such a pride is mine.”

“Those are daring words, *signorina*. Perhaps you entertain a hope that the suit will not be brought? Perhaps, indeed, you imagine that what I told you is untrue?”

Lucia sprang suddenly to her feet.

“No, *signor*,” she exclaimed, with flaming eyes, “I *imagine* nothing! I *know* that what you have told me is a silly fable! I have more faith in the voice of my heart than in that document, which may be a forgery for aught I know.”

Cadama started violently. A deep flush crimsoned his face.

"Very well, *signorina*," he returned, in a voice that trembled with repressed anger. "I take up the glove you have flung at my feet! You do not believe me—then a court of justice shall decide whether I have told the truth or not. But I have still another proof. Your mother, Carmella Boccani, had another child—a boy who is called Francisco. This boy has been near you for the last six months—he is Baron Von Menken's servant, the Francisco whose resemblance to you is so unmistakable."

For an instant Lucia stared speechlessly at the speaker. Then she covered her face with her hands and sank back into her chair moaning:

"Francisco! Yes—yes—it must be true! Father! Father! Father!" she cried aloud, in an agony of grief and passionate despair.

With triumph gleaming in his eyes, Cadama looked down upon the trembling girl. He had conquered at last!

He moved softly toward her, bent one knee, and resting his hand on the arm of her chair, said in a low tone:

"Don't yield to despair, *signorina*—all is not yet lost. I have the power to save you from disgrace and beggary. The papers which can rob you of your father and your fortune are in my hands. If I toss them into the fire, the only proofs that you are not Colonel Von Hackert's daughter will be destroyed, for not even Francisco has the means to prove that he is your brother. If I burn those fateful papers, that dissolute student, Herbert von Hackert may urge his claim in vain; that envious beauty, Frau Von Hilgersdorf may sow her poisonous seed in vain. One word from you, Lucia, and those papers will burn to ashes in yonder

grate. Lucia, Lucia, I love you, and want you for my own! In my beautiful land—in dear sunny Italy, we will forget all sorrow. You shall be as happy as the day is long, and you will learn to love me in return. Speak the word I am yearning to hear from your lips, Lucia—the word which will make me happy and release you from poverty and disgrace.”

He had drawn the half-unconscious girl's hands from her face and was about to press them to his lips, when the door of the adjoining room was flung open and Francisco sprang to his side.

“Scoundrel!” exclaimed the lad, seizing the *signor's* collar in a grasp of iron and lifting him to his feet. “Enough of this! Enough of your lies—your shameless juggling! Knave—villain! You shall feel the weight of my arm—the arm of an innocent boy whom you would make a criminal in order to gain your rascally ends! You shall feel how *I* can revenge a wrong before a court of justice pronounces sentence on you!”

The blow from the lad's uplifted fist would have fallen with terrible force on the startled attorney's pale face had not another arm intercepted it. In his savage fury, Francisco had not heard Baron Von Menken and Elimar Waldau, who had burst into the room almost at the same moment with himself.

“Is this the way you obey my orders, Francisco?” sternly demanded Menken, catching the lad's swiftly descending arm in a firm grasp, while Elimar bent solicitously over the fainting girl. “You ought to be ashamed to soil your hands punishing such a miscreant. Release the scoundrel!”

With a burning face and quivering in every limb, Francisco obeyed, and loosed his grasp on the *signor's* collar. The latter, realizing that all danger from the infuriated lad was past, instantly regained his usual

composure. He adjusted his rumpled collar and cravat, then, drawing himself to his full height, turned toward Baron Von Menken and demanded imperiously :

"Who gave you the right, baron, to intrude like a bandit into my apartments? Were you alone I should teach you how to enter a gentleman's private chamber, but you took good care to come well attended," he concluded, with an insolent glance toward Waldau.

The veins in Menken's forehead stood out like thick cords—he was fearfully excited. But he regained instant control of himself, and said, in his usual quiet tone :

"You are a scoundrel, Giulio Cadama. That is my reply to your impudence. I have no further business with you. If you have any more rhetoric at your command save it for the court of justice, where you will have to answer the charges of swindling, forgery and receiver of stolen goods."

The attorney's face became a shade paler; but his sneering laugh and words were as insolent as before :

"Do you imagine, baron, that you are talking to a school-boy, whom you can frighten with empty threats? How dare you," he added with a malicious grin, "interrupt a private interview between myself and that young lady—"

"If you dare utter another word in such a tone about the lady I will break every bone in your miserable body?" with sudden fierce anger interrupted the baron, coming so close to the attorney that the latter involuntarily retreated several paces. "By some rascally means you lured Fräulein Von Hackert—"

He was continuing, when the *signor*, in turn, interrupted in a sneering tone :

"Fräulein von Hackert? There is no Fräulein Von Hackert. The colonel's only child lies buried by the

Ticino, and the young woman whom it pleases you to call by that name is the daughter of a beggar. Arrest—imprison me if you like, it will not prevent me from wrenching the coronet from the brow of yon haughty hussy—”

Quick as a flash Menken seized the speaker by the throat and flung him on his knees. Every vestige of color had vanished from the baron's face.

“You miserable cur !” he gasped, and unable longer to restrain his anger, he shook the Italian as if he were but a reed in his hands. “You cowardly knave ! You dug your own grave when you sought to ruin an innocent lad in order to carry out your scoundrelly designs ! But all your plans are discovered and frustrated, thank heaven ! And but one more proof is required to make your imprisonment for the remainder of your wretched life certain ! Marquis Du Cat !” he called ; and, as if the summons had been momentarily expected, the professor of gaming instantly appeared in the doorway, a sardonic smile on his painted lips ; his right hand grasping a slender walking-stick, his left toying with the costly charms on his watch-chain. “Can you,” continued the baron, retaining his hold on the attorney's collar. “Can you prove that Giulio Cadama, in an agreement with Oreste Chiavoni, favored the coin-theft in the Palazzo Borghese, on the 12th of September, 1879 ; and out of self-interested motives accused an innocent person of being an accomplice of the burglars.”

“Yes, baron, I can prove it,” replied the marquis, nodding his carefully curled head. “I can also furnish further proof, if desired. The Principe Oreste Chiavoni is ready, at any time, to corroborate my statements.”

The howl of rage which came from the lips of the defeated Italian was interrupted by Francisco's eager voice :

"Signor Cadama will not be able to deny that he participated in the theft at the Palazzo. Five of the valuable coins which were stolen from the numismatic cabinet are in the bronze casket on the mantel yonder."

"*Bestia !*" shrieked the attorney ; but Menken already had the casket in his hands. The key was in the lock, for Cadama, shortly before Lucia arrived, had opened the casket to get some papers it contained.

Without a word, Menken took the coins and walked to the door. Two *gendarmes* stood just outside, their carbines resting on their arms. One of them took possession of the coins, the other wrote the names of the witnesses in a little note-book. Then the two stalwart fellows strode toward Cadama and placed themselves one on his right, the other on his left.

"If the *signor* will come willingly with us we will not manacle him," said the one who was evidently the superior of his comrade. "It is only a short distance to the guard-house, where the *signor* will have to stay until to-morrow."

Cadama, seeing that resistance was useless, yielded submissively to his captors. At the door, however, he turned, and letting his eyes, in which there was an expression of mingled hate and rage, rest on Baron Von Menken, said in a threatening tone :

"We shall meet again, baron, when we will settle accounts !"

Menken made no reply. He walked without another glance toward the *signor* into the adjoining room, where Waldau had carried the unconscious Lucia. There was nothing to be done but to wrap the poor girl in shawls and carry her back to the counselor's villa. She must not remain longer in the pavilion, where some of Frau Von Hilgersdorf's servants might find her any moment.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### HILGERSDORF VILLA.

The night was very dark. The little lantern carried by one of Signor Cadama's captors was insufficient to light the way for the three men. They were, therefore compelled to proceed very slowly along the road, which the late rains had washed out and rendered difficult of passage.

The wily *signor* had not got far beyond the gates of Frau Von Hilgersdorf's villa when he began to plan an escape.

The two sturdy fellows accompanying him made a forcible escape impossible. Cunning alone could aid him here.

With a keen eye Cadama peered right and left. He was familiar with the neighborhood. The guard-house in which he was to spend the night stood hard by the roadside, only about a quarter of a mile distant. Dense shrubbery lined one side of the road ; beyond stretched a labyrinth of villa-gardens, pleasure-grounds and parks.

"Curse this darkness !" muttered the lantern-bearer, halting. He lifted the slide of the lantern to raise the

wick, when a sudden gust of wind extinguished the tiny flame.

Now was Cadama's opportunity. With a sudden dexterous movement he dodged behind the *gendarme* on his right, and dashed into the shrubbery.

"Hold him! Catch him!" cried the *gendarmes* in unison, starting in pursuit and both tumbling ignominiously into the ditch by the roadside.

While the captors were struggling in the mire, their escaped captive forced his way through the dripping bushes. The thorns tore his face, his hands and clothes, but he heeded them not. After awhile he stopped to breathe and listen if his captors were following. He could hear them curse and fume on the further side of the dense hedge which separated the place on which he stood from the highway; could hear them blame each other for his escape—then their voices died away in the distance.

Cadama rejoiced, for his calling had taught him what to expect of an Italian officer of the law; he knew he had nothing further to fear—for that night at least. He now cast a searching glance about him. It was not easy to tell just where he was, but he very soon discovered a way out of the labyrinth. Directly in front of him rose the white walls of a villa that was familiar to him. He groped his way along the graveled path to the house from which he knew a carriage road led to the highway.

He soon found the road, and once on it, stepped out briskly, without fear of encountering any pedestrians on this rainy dark night. Very soon the outlines of houses rose before him. On his right lay the Castiglinoli quarter, on the left the Church of the Madonna della Costa, whose snowy walls gleamed distinctly through the darkness.

Cadama walked rapidly through the streets and halted at last in front of a low, weather-beaten dwelling. A faded sign above the doorway gave the passerby to understand that "Pietro Corali, dealer in French and native wines," dwelt here.

Cadama lifted the rusty knocker and let it fall sharply against the door. The inmates of the house were still awake. A voice was heard inside grumbling :

"*Maledetto !* Who can that be at this late hour?"

"Open the door, Pietro," called Cadama, placing his lips close to the keyhole. "Open the door to the man who won your suit for you."

Instantly the bolt was drawn, the door swung back, and a bright light fell from the interior of the room on the *signor*.

"*Santa Madonna !*" ejaculated the owner of the wine shop. "Whence come you, and what is the matter, Signor Cadama?"

"Let me come in first," rather impatiently responded the attorney, stepping across the threshold, "then you shall hear everything. Give me a dry coat and a glass of hot wine. I am drenched to the skin."

He sank exhausted into a chair, and old Pietro hastened to supply the wants of his guest. The dressing-gown he produced was ragged and soiled ; and the huge felt slippers, worn and old, but both served their purpose, as did the excellent mulled wine Pietro prepared over a spirit lamp.

"I am pursued, old man," remarked Cadama, after he had swallowed a tumblerful of the hot wine. "Why I am pursued cannot interest you. What I want you to do for me is to hide me for twenty-four hours in one of the many secret nests you have in this old rookery, and at the end of that time send me out so disguised that my own mother would not recognize me. You

know you will not lose anything by lending me your aid?"

Pietro merely nodded. He understood what was desired of him.

Early the next morning Baron Von Menken learned from one of the *gendarmes* that the prisoner had escaped. The baron's sensations may be imagined. He dressed himself hurriedly and hastened to the room occupied by the Marquis Du Cat, who lodged for the night in the same hotel.

The marquis had not yet risen. He lay in bed with a night-cap drawn down over his ears, divested of all his artificial attractions, and was not a little indignant that the porter should have admitted Herr Von Menken without first inquiring whether he was ready to receive visitors.

The baron paid no attention to Monsieur Du Cat's voluble apologies, but began at once :

"Cadama has escaped!" he said curtly. "Those donkeys of *gendarmes* allowed him to run away. I dare say he will conceal himself in Frau Von Hilgersdorf's villa until an opportunity occurs for him to leave San Remo secretly. We must call immediately on the widow, and wire your friend Fratti to come here by first train."

"I am at your command, *monsieur*," responded a muffled voice from the bedclothes. "I am always ready for a row of this sort."

Menken seated himself at the table and wrote his message.

"EMMANUELE FRATTI,

"Mentone, Quartier St. Roche.

"Come without fail on first train. Important business.

"CARADAC."

The telegram was sent off at once ; and punctually,

at ten o'clock, the man who had been summoned thus hastily, arrived at the Hotel de la Paix, San Remo. A very few minutes afterward Herr Von Menken, accompanied by the marquis and his friend and the two *gendarmes*, set out for the Hilgersdorf Villa.

Signor Fratti was an active, undersized man, with a pair of cunning eyes, and with the engaging manner of a polished man of the world. He spoke German with great difficulty ; but boasted with so much pride of his accomplishment, that Herr Von Menken could hardly restrain his laughter while listening to the strange gibberish the little cavalier was pleased to call "the baron tongue."

Frau Von Hilgersdorf, becomingly arrayed in a snowy morning-gown, had just stepped out on her balcony when Baron Von Menken and his companions entered her garden. That she was greatly surprised to see the little company—two of them police officers—may be imagined. She had just risen, and had not yet heard of the occurrence in the pavilion the preceding evening.

While the *gendarmes* stationed themselves at the entrance-door and the two knights of the green table waited in the hall, Herr Von Menken sent up his card to the mistress of the house.

Although her pride prompted her to refuse to see the baron, the fair widow was too curious to learn the object of his singular visit. She received him, therefore, but with a frigid politeness that was equalled by Herr Von Menken's cold courtesy.

"That I am surprised to receive a visit from you at this early hour you will understand, Herr Von Menken," she said, after the conventional salutations had been exchanged. "Who are your companions, and what means the very singular escort of police officers?"

"We have come to search your house, gracious lady," bluntly replied the baron. "You are suspected of concealing a dangerous swindler and forger, who was arrested in your pavilion last night, but who escaped while on the way to the guard-house."

Frau Von Hilgersdorf became pale as death; she laid her hand against her rapidly beating heart, as if to quiet its pulsations. For an instant she was terribly frightened, but only for an instant. The next her terror gave place to indignation.

"I don't think you know what you are saying, baron," she exclaimed, with angry *hauteur*, surveying her visitor with flashing eyes. "What have I in common with swindlers and forgers? How dare you come here to insult me?"

She stepped to the bell and was about to ring for a servant, but the baron quickly laid a restraining hand on her arm.

"Hold—don't ring for witnesses!" he said, in a stern tone, that contained a warning sound. "The fewer persons to know of this affair the better for you! Your 'courier' and 'Italian teacher,' Signor Cadama, was arrested yesterday evening on the charge of swindling and forgery. He escaped from the guard on the way to prison; and as he is known to be an inmate of this house and on intimate terms with its mistress, it is supposed that he is hiding here—with or without your consent, Frau Von Hilgersdorf."

The widow's hands trembled, but there was no other outward indication of her excitement. She took a small ornament from the table near her and toyed with it as she spoke:

"Your accusations amuse me, baron," she returned, forcing a smile to her lips. "I confess it is rather unpleasant to learn that the person, whose presence one

has tolerated, proves to be a rogue ; but I deny your insulting assertion that Signor Cadama was on intimate terms with me. The man was a sort of upper servant, and was always treated as such."

"Notwithstanding your assertion," coolly responded the baron, "I am afraid you will have to appear before a court of justice as being privy to Cadama's forgeries. The *signor* received from your hands various letters of your husband's, from which he was enabled to make some clever forgeries. You will hardly deny, madam, that you are ignorant of the motive for the forgeries, or that you gave him the letters of your own free will?"

Frau Ilona pressed the fragile ornament with such force between her palms that it was crushed to pieces.

"What ridiculous nonsense !" she ejaculated ; but her lips lost their color and trembled slightly. "Cadama was recommended to me as an honest person whom I could trust to arrange my deceased husband's papers. If he abused my confidence in so shameless a manner then I ought to be pitied instead of accused of being his accomplice ? I think our interview, Herr Von Menken, may terminate here. My nerves have endured enough. A servant will conduct your *gensdarmes* through the house. Or," she added with a sneer, "do you demand that I conduct the search in person?"

Herr Von Menken ignored the sneer. His face remained stern ; but there was a trace of contempt around his broad, firm mouth.

"At any other time, Frau Von Hilgersdorf," he said coldly, "I should respect your indisposition—to-day, however, I must insist that you hear me to the end. Your nerves were not too delicate to prevent your planning with a crafty scoundrel to ruin an innocent girl—to tear her from wealth and a lofty social posi-

tion, and fling her into poverty and disgrace. Your nerves were strong enough to permit a forgery to be made under your eyes. You did not dream that watchful friends guarded the poor girl whom you sought to ruin, and who might justly claim much of the fortune now belonging to you, but which was obtained by unfair means by the man whose name you bear—”

“Herr Von Menken !”

Frau Von Hilgersdorf almost shrieked the name in her furious rage. Her eyes blazed ; she flung the crumbled ornament from her and stamped her feet on the carpet.

“Were I a man,” she continued, trembling with fury, “my reply to your insulting language would come from the muzzle of a pistol. I am only a defenseless woman, consequently you insult me with impunity. I demand an explanation of your shameful accusation, Herr Von Menken—and I demand your proofs also !”

Without a word the baron stepped to the door, opened it and called :

“Signor Fratti !”

The old gamester entered and bowed with courtly grace to the widow.

“Signor Fratti,” continued Menken, “tell this lady of your acquaintance with Herr Von Hilgersdorf, and be particular to mention the episode which robbed young Annibile Faresi of his own and his sister’s fortune and cost him his life.”

Fratti bowed again ; then he began to relate what the reader has already learned from the Marquis Du Cat. He spoke simply and in a straightforward manner, without exaggeration, without casting unnecessary ignominy on the questionable memory of the deceased general, and without shielding himself.

“Two of our comrades and myself,” he said in con-

clusion, "were sent to prison for three years. Hilgersdorf made his escape from Rome in good time. If the *signora* doubts my word, I am willing to produce satisfactory proofs. I have a number of letters which I received from her husband relating to the affair. I have preserved these letters carefully, for I believed I might sometime have occasion to use them."

Herr Von Menken thanked the *signor*, who bowed and quitted the room. Then the baron turned to Frau Ilona, who had not uttered a syllable during the gambler's recital, and said :

"Signor Fratti's confession, madam, becomes significant when we remember that Annibile Faresi was the guardian and brother of Carmella Boccani, Lucia's mother."

A scornful smile played around Frau Von Hilgersdorf's lips. She tossed her head with an arrogant gesture.

"Beg pardon, baron," she interposed flippantly, "but you must allow me to correct the romantic statement of your honorable *friend*. The girl who imposes herself on good society as the daughter of Colonel Von Hackert-Selchern is not the descendant of a Roman banker—she is the daughter of a nameless vagrant !"

"Your informant lied when he told you that, madam. Cadama was cunning enough to know that he could more easily influence your hatred of Fräulein Lucia if he placed her ancestors in a shepherd's hut on the *campagna*, instead of a patrician home. The *signor* is no ordinary rogue. What he does is carefully planned, and he had his reasons for making you believe Lucia the child of vagrant parents. The church register of San Maria Maggiore in Rome will convince you of the contrary. In conclusion, madam, I must correct your assertion that Fräulein Lucia 'imposes' herself on society



LUX ENSCONCED HERSELF THEREIN.—*See Page 347.*



as the daughter of Colonel Von Hackert-Selchern. She is legally his daughter. She was adopted by law in the second year of her age."

Frau Von Hilgersdorf smiled disdainfully.

"As if *that* could change the blood in her veins!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "One can easily see that she is low-born. Thank Heaven, society will know now to distinguish between the vulgar graft and the genuine scion!"

Menken drew his powerful frame to its full height at this implied threat. At this moment he looked quite like a knight of the olden time.

"Blue blood, madam," he responded in a cutting tone, "can become tainted and poisonous, and the canker-worm of ignoble pride often destroys the genuine scion. The proudest name sometimes becomes tarnished with dishonor—as witness the one you bear! I am sorry to be obliged to speak thus to a woman. I did not come here to quarrel with you nor to insult you, but to warn you. You hate Lucia von Hackert; and when Cadama, your accomplice, is rendered harmless, will seek by scandalous reports to ruin her reputation. I, madam, have sworn to guard her against her enemies, and I must use the only available weapons. I say, therefore, that the moment I hear any scandalous stories concerning Lucia's birth, that moment the world shall learn of the disgrace which besmirches the name of Hilgersdorf! I am in earnest, Frau Von Hilgersdorf, when I swear that I will punish *any one* who dares defame the helpless and innocent girl! You may take your choice: Either you will continue to treat Lucia with the respect she deserves, or you will be publicly stigmatized as the widow of a cheat, to whom only a lucky chance gave a soldier's uniform instead of the criminal's blouse!"

With a sudden exclamation Frau Von Hilgersdorf covered her face with her hands and sank into a chair.

"Enough! Enough!" she gasped. "You can go! No evil word against your charge shall ever cross my lips! I promise, on my honor! Have pity on me now—and go!"

Menken bowed, and without another word turned and left the room. He found the professors of gaming chatting pleasantly together.

"I was not obliged to call upon you, marquis," he said to the old Frenchman, whose countenance exhibited regret. He had not, after all, been allowed to participate in the "row." "We settled the matter without your; but I am indebted to you all the same, and to you also, Signor Fratti. You will oblige me further by not mentioning anything you have heard or know of General Von Hilgersdorf's past."

The promise was given readily; then the baron turned to the *gendarmes*:

"Frau Von Hilgersdorf's servant will conduct you through the house. Let your search be thorough, but do not in any way molest the lady of the house."

An hour later one of the *gendarmes* appeared before Menken at the Hotel de la Paix and announced that the search had been in vain. Cadama was nowhere to be found.





## CHAPTER XXV.

“RIEN NE VA PLUS !”

A golden light from the evening sun trembled on the waves of the blue sea and was reflected in the plate-glass windows of the Casino at Monte Carlo. The lamps in front of the Casino were already lighted, and as the twilight deepened into darkness, the gas jets became more numerous, until at last the entire terrace was illuminated with points of light which were reflected in the dancing waves like a swarm of jack-o'-lanterns.

On the lowermost step of the marble staircase which led to the vestibule of the Casino, crouched a hump-backed man with a basket in which there was a few roses. He was clad in the garb of a peasant; his knee-breeches were patched and faded, worn leather sandals were bound with thongs on his feet, which were covered with coarse stockings. A black felt hat was drawn down over his forehead, and a handkerchief bandaged one eye. He seemed to have had luck in disposing of his flowers, for his basket was almost empty. It was not pity for his abject appearance which had prompted his patrons to buy the roses, but the superstition of a gambler, who sees in every hump-backed person an augury of good luck.

The flower-seller's unbandaged eye from time to time glanced sharply from beneath the protecting hat rim toward the gallery in front of the Casino, when a young man with flushed face, and hollow eyes now appeared. He pushed back his hat to let the cool night air blow over his feverish brow, thrust both hands into the pockets of his short coat, and descended the staircase.

"Buy a flower, young sir!" in a whining voice exclaimed the rose-seller. The young man halted and looked searchingly down at him, as if he had detected something familiar in the tones.

The peasant now selected a yellow rose from his basket, rose to his feet and came closer to the young man, saying :

"Only a franc, good sir." Then he added in a whisper : "You needn't look so astonished, my dear baron, it is myself, and no mistake ! I want you to meet me under the carob-trees in the main alley at midnight, I have something important to say to you."

Herbert von Hackert nodded, took the rose, and tossed a coin into the basket. Then he sauntered to one of the tables in front of the Café de Paris and seated himself. The franc he offered in payment for the glass of absinthe ordered was the last of the sum which Cadama had given him and which he had promised should be the last he would ask for for eight weeks ! But the frivolous youth experienced no regret for his folly—no regret that he had sacrificed his last gold piece to the Moloch of the green table. The gold mine Cadama had taught him to consider his own, had turned his brain, and he did not in the least doubt but the *signor* would again assist him to float his stranded financial ship.

Hackert looked at the clock ; the hands marked the

hour of eleven—the time for closing the Casino. He emptied his glass, pulled his hat over his eyes and left the *café*.

The lamps in the boscase were extinguished, but a crowd of people still lingered in the square in front of the gaming hall. They stood about in groups or promenaded about the rotunda, with its fan-palms, agaves and camellias.

The student made his way slowly through the crowd. He had nothing to do until the appointed meeting under the carob-trees ; he, therefore, occupied his time staring into the faces of his fellow-promenaders and listening to the animated conversation going on around him.

At last the company began to thin out. Some went into the *cafés* to smoke a last cigarette over a cup of “*noir* ;” others went to a restaurant to enjoy a late supper. The square gradually became deserted, and when the last promenader disappeared beyond the glass doors of the “Beau-Rivage Hotel,” Herbert von Hackert turned his steps toward the gnarled trunks of the carobs.

The student’s sharp eyes at once perceived the disguised attorney amid the shadows. Cadama was pacing restlessly to and fro.

“*Salve !*” in a jocular tone saluted Hackert, approaching Cadama and slapping him on the stuffed back. “You look devilish droll with that hump between your shoulders. I should not have recognized you but for your voice. What the deuce prompted you to don this carnival costume—eh ?”

“The game is up ! *Rien ne va plus !*” briefly responded the attorney, and Hackert was startled by his peculiar tone.

“What—what do you mean, my dear fellow ?” asked

the student, becoming suddenly serious under a dawning apprehension of evil.

"We risked everything on one card and have lost, baron. We can now shake our empty pockets and get away from here as best we can."

"Oh," with a shrug, responded the student, not yet comprehending Cadama's meaning, "is that what is the matter with you? If your pockets are empty, there's a pair of us—my last coin went under the croupier's rake. You might stand me on my head and not a single franc would slip from my pockets. But, jesting aside, my dear fellow, you must make haste and put an end to this condition of affairs. Can't you settle that little matter at once?"

"It is settled," interposed Cadama; "and, unfortunately, the *finale* is not what we expected. Instead of supplying you with any more money, I must beg that you repay me as soon as possible the sums I have advanced you from time to time."

For several seconds the student stared fixedly at Cadama's pale face, then he said slowly:

"You must be mad!"

"I am—mad with rage at my defeat, mad with fury at my ill-luck, mad with shame at my stupidity! *Rien ne va plus*, I said a moment ago. The game is up! There is no more hope for you or for me! Fräulein Lucia Von Hackert is the daughter by adoption of your uncle, consequently his legal heir."

Hackert stared at the speaker as if he had not heard aright. He could not believe that his gold mine had vanished—could not believe that the hope which had buoyed him for so many months could vanish thus in a moment. It was too horrible!

"What are you chattering about?" he demanded, brusquely, his eyes burning into Cadama's distorted

face. “You cannot—*cannot*, I say, be speaking the truth. Cease jesting, Cadama, for God’s sake, and tell me plainly what has happened?”

The Italian laughed harshly.

“I never felt less like jesting than now, my dear fellow,” he returned. “What I told you is the truth—the cruel truth! Our case is lost—we can do nothing against Lucia, for she is the legally adopted child of your uncle, who had the legal papers executed when Lucia was only two years old.”

Hackert staggered as if he had received a blow that stunned him. He leaned, half unconscious, against the pedestal of a marble Satyr, whose pallid countenance grinned sardonically down on him.

Lost? Really and truly lost? No more money for the pleasures of the green table? No more money for champagne—for Havanas? No more money to win back what had gone under the croupier’s rake, over yonder in Satan’s palace? Lost—lost—lost!

What now?

The stunned youth was unable to frame a reply to this terrible question. He looked at the cold, sneering face of the man who had deceived him, and then a savage fury took possession of him.

“Who is to blame for our defeat? Who is to blame if all our fine plans have vanished in smoke?” he cried angrily. “Who is to blame but you—you who can boast without acting! You are a man of words, without deeds! Had you intimated that Lucia might be old Hackert’s adopted daughter when you came to me first with your lies, I should have kicked you out of doors!”

“Which you might not have been able to do,” with a sneering smile supplemented Cadama. “Before you talk of kicking me out of your door, baron, I should like to remind you that you owe me one hundred and

thirty thousand marks—for which sum I have your notes in my pocket.”

“You told me only a short time ago that my notes were not worth the paper on which they were written,” with an evil smile retorted the student.

“I had my reasons for telling you so then. To-day matters are different. According to your uncle’s will, you are not to receive the twenty thousand dollars he bequeaths you until you marry; but that does not prevent your creditors from attaching it.”

“Suppose you try it,” interposed the student.

“I have already done so,” replied Cadama, coolly surveying him.

“You are lying!” exclaimed Hackert. “You are lying to frighten me! You would not rob me of the last penny I have in the world?”

“Charity, my dear baron, begins at home. The twenty thousand dollars are not half the amount I can legally demand of you.”

“It is a deal more than I ever got from you!” retorted the student.

“You were at liberty to accept or refuse my money at the interest I demanded.”

Hackert folded his arms and stared in silence at the graveled walk, on which the moonlight was falling through the interstices of the branches overhead.

“Then I am a penniless beggar?” he muttered, as if to himself.

“I believe that is what you might be called,” assented Cadama in an indifferent tone.

“And can starve—perish miserably!”

“If you will not work—”

Cadama was not permitted to complete his mocking response. The infuriated student’s hands were around his throat, choking back further utterance.

Unprepared for the sudden attack, the *signor* fell heavily backward. A muffled groan broke the silence of the night. The feathered and winged creatures, which had sought shelter in the lower branches of the carob-trees, flew excitedly hither and thither.

In the struggle with his adversary, Cadama had managed to slip his hand into his breast pocket. The next instant something glittered in the moonlight. Hackert saw the threatening pistol muzzle close to his face, and was just in time to dash it down with a swift blow. As he did so a shot rang out. A sharp cry from the Italian told what had happened. The next moment he lay perfectly still on the ground.

With staring eyes and face haggard with horror the student sprang to his feet and dashed into the shrubbery.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two men who were walking from the railway station heard the pistol shot. Monsieur Du Cat and Signor Fratti halted and looked inquiringly at each other.

“The sound came from over yonder,” said Fratti, pointing toward the carob-trees. “Some wretch, I dare say, who has lost his last franc at the gaming-table and seeks relief from life’s cares by putting a bullet into his brain. That spot seems the favorite place for Monte Carlo’s suicides.”

“Let us go over,” suggested the good-natured marquis, “perhaps the unfortunate fellow is still alive.”

Fratti nodded, and the two hurried in the direction of the carob-trees.

“It is as dark as Egypt here !” observed Du Cat, moving carefully when they got into the shadow of the trees. “We must be careful, or we shall—”

He was interrupted by his companion, who uttered a startled cry :

“Here he is ! Come here, Caradac, and help lift him

up. It's all over with the poor wretch, I'm afraid."

The two men dragged the apparently lifeless form into the moonlight.

"*Per bacco!*" ejaculated the *signor*, peering into the ghastly face. "I believe it is that hump-backed peasant who was selling roses in front of the Casino this afternoon."

The marquis in turned stooped and looked closely at the pallid face upturned in the moonlight.

"Well?" he muttered under his breath, while a sudden chill shook his frame. "I am almost compelled to believe there is such a thing as retribution! Come Fratti, let us carry the fellow to the hotel—he still breaths. Philibert will take him in."

M. Philibert was a shrewd landlord, and at first refused to receive the dying man; but the two old gamblers had brought him so much custom that he yielded at last to their importunities, and allowed Cadama to be carried into a room and laid on a bed. Then Du Cat sent for a doctor.

"A serious case," said the doctor, with a wise air. "A very serious case, indeed, and a singular wound to be self-inflicted. The ball struck the third rib from above, then took an oblique direction and lodged near the lung. The least agitation will cause death."

"Can he live until to-morrow?" inquired Du Cat.

"He may live until the day after," replied the doctor, "but he will require the most careful attention. Good evening, *messieurs!*" He had seen Du Cat place a twenty-franc piece on the table, and considered his brief services an equivalent for the meager fee.

An hour or so later the marquis sent the following telegram to Baron Von Menken:

"Cadama is dying. Come at once.

"DU CAT."

The following morning, at ten o'clock, the baron arrived at Monte Carlo. The marquis was waiting at the station for him and related what had occurred.

Menken shook his head skeptically. He would not believe that Cadama had attempted to commit suicide. The *signor* was not weak enough for that.

“Wait here in the restaurant until I send for you, baron,” said Du Cat, when they arrived at the Hotel Philibert. “I will prepare Cadama for your visit.”

The attorney lay with closed eyes, breathing heavily. His face was ghastly in its pallor ; his hands, which rested on the bed-covers, trembled constantly.

When the marquis entered the room Cadama opened his eyes, and fixing them with a cold glance on Du Cat, said, in a low, scarcely audible tone—one could see by his drawn features how painful it was for him to speak :

“My mortal enemy came to my rescue ! That almost equals the legend of the compassionate Samaritan—nay, it surpasses it ! Tell me truly, my loyal fellow-swindler, what does the doctor say of me ? How long have I to live ?”

“If you will promise to keep perfectly quiet and not excite yourself I will tell you,” replied Du Cat, bending over the bed.

A smile crossed the lips of the wounded man—a sneering, scornful smile.

“I am not afraid to die, old boy ! I am a philosopher who can calmly face the Eternal Reaper. Come—tell me—what did the doctor say ?”

“He says you may live until to-morrow—if you do not excite yourself.”

Cadama closed his eyes and breathed heavily for several moments. Then he opened his eyes again and motioned for the marquis to come nearer.

"You are acquainted with Baron Von Menken?" he said in a low whisper.

The marquis nodded assent.

"I want to see him—will you send for him—at once?"

"Herr Von Menken is here," replied Du Cat. "Shall I ask him to come to you now?"

Cadama nodded, and the marquis hastened to summon Von Menken, with whom he returned in a few moments.

"*Rien ne va plus*, baron," whispered the dying man, when Menken bent over him. "The game is up, and I am the loser! I received my death from Herbert von Hackert's hand, but it was an accident. Don't arrest him; let him go free. Perhaps in the roulette of life the ball will some day fall more favorably for him than it has for me. I sent for you, baron, because I want to say something to you: I alone am to blame for everything. Frau Von Hilgersdorf is not so guilty as you imagine. I lied to her in order to gain her assistance. It was her husband who betrayed the secret of Lucia's birth to me—he told me, and wanted me to assist him to carry out his plans of revenge against Colonel Von Hackert. But Hilgersdorf did not live to carry out his plans, and after his death I concluded to try for the colonel's money myself. My plans were carefully laid, but you were too clever for me. Baron, you checkmated me."

He paused a moment to breathe heavily; the flush which had colored his cheeks faded and left him ghastly pale.

"I stand at the portal of eternity," he resumed in a faint whisper. "I cannot repair the wrong I have done. I can—only—ask—pardon!" A sudden convulsion shook his frame, then he lay perfectly still for a few seconds. Once more his lips parted. The baron bent

his ear close to them, and heard the faint murmur :  
 "*Rien ne va plus !*"

The game was up !

\* \* \* \* \*

Before leaving Monte Carlo Baron Von Menken made all the arrangements necessary to send Cadama's body to Rome for burial. When he returned to San Remo, late in the afternoon, Elimar Waldau met him at the entrance of the hotel with a beaming countenance.

"Lucia has safely passed the crisis, God be praised !" he exclaimed, giving Menken's outstretched hand a warm pressure. "The doctor assures us that all danger is past, and that her early recovery depends entirely upon careful nursing. The counselor has sent to the Casa di Salute for a sister of mercy, who will relieve Frau Von Sporken, Frau Dreyfuss and Annie Doring at night. But you look serious, Attokar. Has Cadama prepared more disagreeable hours for you ?"

"Retribution has overtaken the poor wretch," replied the baron. "He is dead—shot by young Hackert, with whom he had a quarrel."

"Cadama dead !" repeated Elimar. "Shot by the student ? A singular turn of fate, truly ! Give me the particulars."

Baron Von Menken related what he knew of the affair.

"I have long suspected," he added, in conclusion, "that the Italian attorney and young Hackert were leagued together in the plot against Lucia. Cadama's dying request was that Hackert should not be arrested, as the shot was entirely accidental. The student has disappeared, and I wish most heartily he would never be heard of again ! I learned nothing new from Cadama. His last words only confirmed what I already

knew. Hilgersdorf, as I surmised, was the originator of the plot to betray the secret of Lucia's birth, in order to revenge himself on her father. But neither he nor any of his fellows in villainy succeeded in injuring the only creature who made my old friend's life happy. Let us thank Heaven for it !"

"And after Heaven you, Attokar !" added Waldau, with deep emotion. "You have guarded Lucia with a father's care, and your noble unselfishness deserves warmer gratitude than Lucia has shown you. But you are accustomed to be misunderstood and misjudged. Was it not a long time before I learned to appreciate your self-sacrificing friendship? Just so sure as my eyes were at last opened to see in you the best of men, just so certain is it that Lucia also will give you her unbounded confidence and warmest gratitude when she learns all that you have done for her."

"I desire no thanks for doing my duty," responded Menken, almost curtly. "But, should Lucia give me what she has always refused me—her respect, she will make me as happy as—it is possible for me to be in this life."

He turned abruptly away to conceal the expression of pain which at that moment distorted his stern face.





## CHAPTER XXVI.

“YES.”

Unusual silence had reigned in the villa occupied by Counselor Dreyfuss and his family since the eventful evening when Lucia was brought back unconscious from the pavilion. Annie Doring's merry laughter had ceased, the counselor's good-natured bluster was not heard, even Frau Therese's indefatigable tongue seemed to have become mute. The servants stole about the house on tiptoe, and whispered only the necessary inquiries concerning household matters, the Italian cook in the kitchen had lost all interest in his art because Frau Dreyfuss paid no further heed to his gastronomic feats.

In her room lay Lucia, pale and still. The traces of the violent brain-fever which had followed the terrible excitement she had undergone in the interview with Signor Cadama were plainly visible in her wasted features. She was still very weak and still became fearfully agitated whenever her thoughts wandered back to that fateful evening when she had listened to the Italian's revelations. She tried in vain to banish these thoughts but they persisted in haunting her like unpleasant dreams. Through the long sleepless nights

all sorts of shapes and visions would pass before her eyes. She would see among them the shadowy features of the man she had loved with the reverent affection of a daughter; the adored image would lift its waxen hands to place them in benediction on his head. Many a time in her wild delirium she had tried to seize the hands, and always found her own clasped in the cool, soft palms of the watchful sister from the Casa di Salute. Then another phantom would pass before her vision. A lovely face with sparkling eyes would bend close above her—a face so like her own that it might have been a reflection. “Mother! Mother,” she would then whisper in a yearning tone.

Eight days had passed since the tragedy underneath the carob-trees. Frau Von Sporken sat beside Lucia, who had just awakened from a fitful slumber.

“Aunt,” suddenly exclaimed the young girl, seizing the old lady’s hand in her own, “I have a great favor to ask of you, and I know you will grant it when I tell you that my perfect recovery depends on it. Dear aunt, I feel that I should gain strength were I able to calm my mind—to banish from my brain all the exciting thoughts that torment me day and night—and that I shall be able to do only when I know the truth—I mean the truth about my birth. What that dreadful man told me is partly true—I feel it, but he arranged his story to suit his plans. I know, dear aunt, *you* will not deceive me. Therefore, tell me—tell me everything—that my heart, my mind, may once more be at peace!”

Frau Von Sporken had been anxiously waiting for such a request from her young charge. Baron Von Menken had related to Counselor Dreyfuss what had occurred in the pavilion, and had revealed the secret of Lucia’s birth, knowing that it could no longer remain

hidden from the world. Consequently, Frau Von Sporken was able to tell the young girl all she desired to know.

As tenderly as carefully and diplomatically as possible the worthy old lady related the romantic history of the unfortunate Carmella Boccani, taking care always to keep Colonel Von Hackert and his affection for his adopted daughter the central point of her recital.

"It was the greatest, the noblest proof of his love for you, my dear," she said in conclusion, "that the colonel concealed from you your true origin. He wanted you to feel that you were really his child; that you really had a right to the proud name of Hackert-Selchern, and that the rancor of the envious might never fall upon you. For this reason he adopted you secretly, and when he died, left the papers verifying your adoption in the keeping of his best, his truest friend, whom he knew he could trust to guard them and you. But the secret is known now. It can no longer remain hidden that you are only an adopted daughter, but you need not be ashamed of your mother. She was an honest upright woman, who, during her life of trial and privation, made but one mistake, and that was in marrying the man she loved. That was no sin—only a misfortune, and you may thank God for giving you a second father in the noble man who did for you what your own failed to do."

Frau Von Sporken ceased, and looked attentively at the young girl, who was lying quietly on the pillow, an interested expression on her pale face. She had not once interrupted the recital; now she drew a long breath, grasped the old lady's hand, and pressing it warmly, said:

"Thank you, dear aunt. Of course, it grieves me that I never knew my mother—that I never was able

to lighten her burdens. Perhaps it was best for her children, after all, that I was adopted by Colonel Von Hackert. Had he not done so, I should not be able now to help my brother, and we, very likely, would both be poor and unhappy. Now, however, I can help Francisco. We will take the poor lad to our hearts, will we not, dear aunt? He is a good boy, and really quite clever. He has managed to learn many useful things, and we will soon teach him what he yet lacks. When he has become a brave and honorable man I shall be doubly grateful to the noble man who was a father to me, and who made it possible for me to help my brother."

Frau Von Sporken nodded a smiling approval.

"I should be delighted to have Francisco live with us, my dear Lucia," she said; "but I don't believe he will consent to leave Baron Von Menken, who delivered him from the power of that wicked Italian, and of whom he is very fond. We need not trouble ourselves about your brother, my dear; for, even if he refuses to come to us, he will have a good home with the baron."

Lucia passed her hand over her brow.

"What a horrible thing is prejudice!" she exclaimed. "Of all the people I know, Baron Von Menken always impressed me as being the most disagreeable! I never could understand papa's affection and friendship for him, and my antipathy became veritable hatred when I learned that the baron was in possession of a secret concerning the Hackert family. I actually insulted him when he refused to reveal the secret to me. To-day I know why he refused! To-day I understand his words which mystified me then! He watched over me faithfully; he guarded me from my enemies, and I insulted him with my suspicions! Oh, I have much

to regret—much to make good ! How I wish I were strong enough now—how gladly would I tell him how sorry I am for my mistrust !”

“You will very soon be able to do so, my dear. Now, however, you must rest. We have had enough excitement for to-day.”

Lucia’s convalescence began that day. She improved visibly, and it was not long until the doctor gave permission for her to be removed to the veranda. Then, while she lay carefully wrapped in shawls in her easy-chair, from which she could look over the sea and into the park surrounding the villa, the rest of the family would group themselves about her. The ladies, as usual, with sewing and knitting ; and the counselor with his newspaper, at which he rarely glanced.

It was during this season of convalescence that a little conversation took place between Herr Dreyfuss and Baron Von Menken concerning Lucia. The baron had seen in Rahlou’s newspaper, a few days after Cadama’s death, another article relating to the “burglary” at Colonel Von Hackert’s residence. Menken at once consulted Herr Dreyfuss as to the best way to stop these attacks on Lucia. The counselor was furious ; his broad face glowed with anger, and his plump fist more than once emphasized the force of his words on the top of the table beside which he was sitting.

“Incredible !” he ejaculated. “Incredible ! One can hardly believe that there are creatures base enough to fling stones at a helpless girl merely to satisfy a petty spite ! But wait, you miserable scoundrels ! We have just begun to clear out the rubbish, and your turn will soon come ! Of course, my dear Menken, the first thing to do is to sue that villain Rahlou for slander.”

“I am afraid so,” assented the baron reluctantly.

"After the scene with Waldau at the Café Bauer the fellow is not worthy being called to account as between gentlemen. But we can't sue Ralhou personally. We must bring suit against the publisher of the newspaper. I have business in Berlin, in a day or two, and shall attend to it. I am sorry, for Lucia's sake, that Rahlou's vulgarity brings the affair into the courts after all; but an example must be made, else there will be no end to the scurrilous gossip."

Three days after this conversation, Baron Von Menken and Francisco came to bid Lucia good-by. The baron looked pale and careworn; traces of melancholy were also to be seen in the countenance of the young *campagnole*, who was clad in a becoming travelling costume. While Francisco, at Lucia's request, had visited the villa frequently during her convalescence, Menken saw her to-day for the first time since the memorable evening in the pavilion. A sudden gleam lighted his eyes when the young girl came toward him and held out her hand.

"You are going away, Herr Von Menken," she said, with sincere regret in her tones and face. "Just now, too, when I am beginning to live again! That is not treating me kindly! But I hope it is to be only a brief absence, and that we shall see you back again very soon."

"I am going to Berlin to attend to some important business, by dear girl," he responded quietly. "Afterward, I intend to take up my pilgrim's staff, and wander—perhaps to Japan, perhaps to India, or North America. My best years are passing swiftly away, and I want to see those regions of the globe I have not yet seen, before I get too old to travel."

Lucia's face saddened.

"Oh, Herr Von Menken! Then this is really the

last time I shall see you for many months, perhaps years? And I have looked forward—now that everything is clear between us—to a pleasant and confidential friendship with you! I want so much to atone for the wrong I have done you. Believe me, dear Herr Von Menken, I regret most sincerely to have so misunderstood you, and I beg you from my heart to forgive me for offending you—"

"Pray, Lucia," hastily interposed the baron, "take back your appeal for forgiveness. You never gave me offense, because I never for one instant forgot that your heart was incapable of unkind thoughts. You were only frank, and candidly showed your contempt because you imagined me contemptible. I do not deny that I was pained, but offended? Never! But the past is past! And one of the best, perhaps the best, gift to man is the ability to forget. Let us think no more of what saddens us, but let us speak of the future."

Lucia laid her hand in Menken's; he touched his lips to it, then gently released it.

"Your magnanimity shames me, baron. You are too generous. I deserve to be punished. Rest assured that so long as I live, I will remember how faithfully the 'unseen hands' guarded me against evil. It is written, that the warmest friendships are those which began in enmity, and I believe it. Heretofore I believed you my enemy, henceforward no power on earth can break our friendship!"

The baron suddenly bent his head, his feature were convulsed with a singular emotion.\*

"And Cicco?" continued Lucia, as Herr Von Menken remained silent. "Are you, too, going to desert me?"

"Don't be offended, dear Lucia," responded the lad, resting a beseeching glance on her face. "But I must

go with Herr Von Menken. My life belongs to him. Besides, were I to stay with you, the world would always remember that our mother was a poor forsaken woman, and that your brother was once a servant—”

“Cicco, Cicco,” interposed Lucia, with tearful eyes. “Do you imagine that I should be ashamed of our mother or of you? No, indeed! Let the world say what it pleases, I don’t care for its opinion. Baron Von Menken says truly that forgetfulness is man’s best gift. Why should we remember the past? I thank God that I have wealth—not for wealth’s sake, for I despise all mercenary feelings; but I know and realize the power of money. It compels respect, and if you will stay with me, Cicco, you shall share my fortune.”

Francisco flung himself at his sister’s feet, and covered her hands with kisses.

“I understand you fully, my sweet sister!” he cried, his voice trembling with emotion. “I know you would do everything for me, but I cannot stay with you; believe me, it is best that I should go away. Besides, I owe so much to my benefactor yonder, he will take care of me. Pray—pray let me go with him!”

“Pardon me, dear Lucia,” here interposed the baron, “if I presume to interfere in what should be your affair alone. I have learned to love Francisco, and beg that you will let him come with me. He will remind me daily of you, and that will make him dearer still. As my noble friend, your adopted father, took you to his heart, so will I look upon Francisco as my child; and you may depend on it, miss,” he added with a smile, “that I shall be a good father, and as my son and heir, he must gratefully refuse the pecuniary assistance you have generously offered to him.”

Lucia was deeply touched by the baron’s generosity;

she looked with shining eyes up into his face, but the words of gratitude died on her lips. She dropped her head beneath the glance of the steel-gray eyes which seemed to burn into her very soul. Before she could compose herself, Herr Von Menken resumed :

"Don't altogether forget me, your new-old friend, *Fräulein*," he said, smiling, and extending his hand in farewell. She laid her own in it ; his fingers clasped it closely, and held it while he continued speaking : "You stand at the portal of a long and happy life, and one is apt to grow egoistic when one is always happy, and forget absent friends. And now, one word more, Lux—allow me to call you so in farewell, as I used to call you when you were a little girl—I go from you with a feeling of gratitude because you understand me at last, because all mistrust of me has vanished from your heart, and because you look on me as a true friend. Shall it always be so, Lux ?"

"Always, Herr Von Menken," briefly replied Lucia, who was strangely affected by the wistful tenderness of his tone.

"Then farewell, Lux ! God bless and keep you always !"

He took her head between his palms, lifted her face and looked earnestly into her tearful eyes. Then he bent and lightly kissed her brow, wrung her hand once more and hastily quitted the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

The counselor and Elimar Waldau accompanied the two travelers to the railway station. On the way they came up with Frau Von Hilgersdorf's old servant, who was walking alongside a cart filled with chests and boxes.

"Well, Kamisch," saluted the counselor, whose munificent tips were gratefully remembered by the old man, "and where may you be travelling ?"

"To Vienna, counselor," replied Kamisch, respectfully doffing his cap. "Frau Von Hilgersdorf has sold her villa and gone to Vienna. She left me here to send this luggage after her. We are going to Hungary to buy back the estate which belonged to the father of Frau Von Hilgersdorf. She wishes to become a landed proprietor in the land of her birth."

When the old man and the luggage cart were left behind them, Menken said with a smile :

"Evidently the fair Ilona wishes to avoid us. 'Tis a wise move to bury herself and her fascinations in the Pussta. It will spare many a masculine heart."

The farewells at the station were brief, as the train was already there when they arrived. Elimar wrung his friend's hand and prepared to wave a last farewell with his handkerchief from the platform. But the baron's eyes were not turned toward him. They were fixed with a tense gaze on the bow-window of a villa that rose above the olive trees a little distance from the station. It was the window of the room where he had bidden farewell to Lucia.

The next moment the train had swept beyond a jutting hill and was lost to sight.

"What have you in view for this evening?" asked the counselor, laying his hand on Elimar's shoulder.

"Nothing !"

"Then come home with me and help me entertain the women. We will sit in the garden and enjoy a little chat. The afternoon is charming. I dare say they are sleighing by this time in Berlin."

Waldau assented ; and as they walked up the broad road which led to the villa, they could see the ladies on the veranda around a tea-table.

The conversation which followed the arrival of the gentlemen was rather animated ; Lucia alone seemed

disinclined to join in it. At last Frau Von Sporken, who had been closely observing the young charge for some time, said :

"Are you not so well to-day, my dear child?"

"I am quite well, *Tantchen*," smilingly replied the girl, "only I feel a trifle chilly. I am almost ashamed to say so with all this bright sunshine around me. I will go for a walk, the exercise will warm me."

Waldau was on his feet in an instant.

"May I accompany you, miss?" he said with an eagerness that was visible to all. "I, too, should like a promenade."

A slight flush colored Lucia's face as she bowed an assent. She flung a shawl about her shoulders, and the two descended the steps, the counselor looking after them with a quizzical light in his merry eyes.

"Let us go down to the beach," suggested Lucia as they walked through the garden. "It is so long since I felt the breath of the sea, with its foam-greeting, that I actually long to tread the sands again."

"Unfortunately there is a rather disagreeable bit of prose mixed with the poetry of the sea," responded Elimar. "The dampness is apt to give one an influenza; and you, miss, are not yet well enough to run such risks."

"I am really quite well again," quickly interposed Lucia. "And I don't feel the least bit cold. I told that little fib in order to get away from the veranda. I was so tired of their well-meaning, but idle chatter!"

"You are still weak and nervous in spite of your assertions to the contrary," persisted Elimar. "You must be careful—"

Lucia shook her head impatiently, and again interrupted him :

"I tell you I am perfectly well, Herr Waldau. In-

deed, I am much better than I was before my illness, for the ban of uncertainty has been removed from me. I confess, however, that the parting from my brother and from—why should I conceal it?—from Herr Von Menken has left me somewhat nervous and agitated."

A sudden pang of jealousy seized Elimar's heart. The next instant he banished the thought as unworthy.

"I understand why you should feel so toward Menken, miss," he said, with a sympathetic smile. "The baron used to be anything but agreeable to you, and the sudden alteration in your feelings toward him naturally affects you. I had a similar experience to yours."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Lucia, almost rejoiced that she was not the only one who had blindly looked on genuine gold as counterfeit. "I thought you and the baron were always the best of friends. Are you not called in Berlin 'The Inseparables?'"

"Yes; Herr Pringsberg originated that witticism. Ever since I became acquainted with the baron—through his purchase of my 'Vestal Virgin'—he has treated me as a brother; while I, at first, looked upon all his amiability and graciousness toward me as insincere, and even sought to find selfish motives in his friendship for me. I learned how deeply I erred, however, and frankly confessed my mistake to Menken."

"How did you discover your mistake?"

"When I learned how nobly and unselfishly he worked to defeat your enemies, miss."

"But, surely, that was no proof of the baron's true friendship for you, Herr Waldau?" smilingly interposed the young girl.

"Oh, yes it was—the surest proof, for Menken knew—" Elimar stopped abruptly and a deep flush reddened his face—"knew how much I respected you, miss," he concluded, with evident embarrassment.

It was Lucia's turn now to color.

"You are a quibbler, Herr Waldau," she returned, a becoming blush mantling her cheeks. Then, as if desiring to change the subject, she added, with animation: "Ah, see what a charming spot! Let us stop here a few minutes."

They had reached the shore, where huge rock-masses projected their fantastic forms into the seething waves. On one of the largest boulders, which was more elevated than the rest, might yet be seen the last remnant of an ancient watch-tower, which had been built here centuries ago, as a protection against the predatory Saracens. Near it the waves had carved a rock into the semblance of an easy-chair. Lucia ensconced herself therein, while the waves anon flung their foamy greeting at her feet.

"You intend very soon to follow Herr Von Menken, I am told?" said Lucia after a pause, during which she had toyed with the loose pebbles lying around her rock-throne.

"Yes, I am sorry to say!" replied Elimar. "I am compelled, by a disagreeable business, to return to Berlin. I have been accused—in an anonymous letter to the Hanging Committee of the Exhibition—of copying my last picture from a work that was painted twenty years ago by an obscure Hungarian artist, and must refute the accusation."

"How very disagreeable!" ejaculated Lucia, indignation coloring her cheeks. "But you will have no difficulty in refuting the shameless slander?"

"I hope I may not have, miss; but the contrary may happen, one can never tell! A friend wrote me that the Hungarian artist's picture was sent for inspection to the committee, and that it is an exact duplicate of my own. It is not possible that two artists can treat

the same subject in a similar manner, without some knowledge of each other; therefore, I imagine there must be a cleverly devised fraud somewhere!"

"Have you any idea who has played you such an abominable trick?"

"My friend thinks Blenkner has something to do with it."

"Herr Blenkner? 'Still-life' Eugene? He is the last person I should suspect; he is not clever enough."

Elimar shrugged his shoulders.

"Blenkner is the leader of that clique whose chief object is to defame their more successful colleagues; and they are generally leagued with a certain class of newspaper men who work with them to accomplish their aim. Shortly after the prize was awarded to my last picture in the exhibition, Rahlou, who is a personal enemy of mine, wrote a savage criticism on it and abused the judges for their favorable decision. Now a second, and more abusive article, appears in which I am denounced as a plagiarist. The majority of newspaper readers swear by their favorite journal, consequently there will always remain some who will look with suspicion on me—even if I succeed in refuting the atrocious accusation."

"Why should you care for the censure of a few when all the rest of the world acknowledges your innocence?" exclaimed Lucia, with sparkling eyes.

"I shall not even care for the 'censure of a few,' if I succeed in making my patrons believe in me, and that, I fear, will be a rather difficult task with the Hungarian picture to controvert my assertions of innocence. I may even be called upon to perform the disagreeable task of returning the money I received for my picture. It is hardly likely that the purchaser will want to retain possession of a plagiarism!"

Lucia looked up into Elimar's excited face and smiled.

"I don't think you will be called upon to take back your picture, Herr Waldau," she responded in a peculiar tone.

Waldau started; there was a significance in the young girl's tone and words he could not understand.

"Fräulein Lucia? What am I—what am I to understand?" he stammered confusedly. "Can it be possible that you—"

He did not conclude his question—the next instant he was on his knees beside her, his hands clasping her own in a firm, warm grasp, his burning eyes fixed on her blushing face.

"Lucia—Lucia! For the second time I kneel to you. I sue for your love, but I am not the same as when I wooed you amid the storm on the Selisburg. I have not forgotten what you said to me then. I took your advice to heart and became a different man. For the second time I beg for your love, Lucia. Will you reject me again? Do not, I pray you, for I could not endure it. I cannot live without your love! Tell me, Lucia, is your answer this time to be yes or no?"

There was a moment's hesitation—only a moment, then a low, trembling but happy voice answered:

"Yes."





## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BARON VON MENKEN'S LAST SERVICE.

The same day that Herr Von Menken arrived in Berlin, he called at the newspaper office in which Herr Rahlou was employed. The office-boy, of whom the baron inquired for the journalist, said that the doctor was engaged just then on a very important article and was not to be seen.

"I must see him, nevertheless," said the baron, taking a card from his pocket. "Take this card to Herr Rahlou and say to him that my business with him is quite as 'important' as the article on which he is engaged."

The boy hesitated a moment, then casting a shy, side-glance at the baron's tall, imposing figure, vanished quickly behind the door.

The baron paced the floor impatiently; the messenger was absent a long time—fully ten minutes as Menken convinced himself by watching the clock—and when at last he reappeared, embarrassment was conspicuous on his youthful countenance.

"The doctor is—very sorry—" he stammered, "but it is—quite impossible for him—to see any one just at present."

Menken's face darkened, the line between his brows deepened, but his tones were as calm as usual when he said :

"Then conduct me to the publisher's private office. I presume Herr Bergheim is accessible to callers."

At that moment the door opened, and the gentleman in question entered. He bowed carelessly to the baron, and asked in a condescending tone :

"How can I serve you, sir?"

"First," returned the baron coldly, "by informing me who wrote the scurrilous article entitled 'Society News,' which appeared in No. 415 of your journal?"

Herr Bergheim assumed an indignant expression and manner.

"Sir?" he ejaculated, aggressively surveying his visitor, "what do you mean by presuming to apply such a term to an article which appeared in my paper? I might take it into my head to call you to account for—"

"Pray do," interrupted the baron, coolly. "Nothing would suit me better. I came here to challenge you, as well as the knave who wrote the infamous lie. My name is Menken—Baron Von Menken—"

"Be good enough to step into my private office," interposed Herr Bergheim, not in the least intimidated by the baron's warlike manner. "We shall be undisturbed there. Take a chair, baron," he continued, when they were in the publisher's comfortable sanctum. "And so you want to fight a duel with me? I think I can suggest a better plan—one, at least, that will save some powder. I will give you the name of the writer, and you can send your challenge directly to him."

Notwithstanding the baron's serious mood, he could not help but smile at the publisher's practical suggestion.

"Who is the writer?" he asked.

Herr Bergheim opened a large account-book and turned over the leaves, muttering to himself:

"No. 415—Society News— Ah!" he added aloud, "here it is: 'Seventy lines—twenty-one marks—paid on November 8th to Hasdroubal Rahlou.'"

Herr Bergheim rose, and pressed the electric button beside his desk.

"Tell Rahlou I want to see him," he said to the lad who answered the summons. Then he turned to the baron. "You can make what arrangements you choose, baron. Don't spare him if he has really told what is not true. I shall know how to deal with him afterward. I have no need of such writers. Truth—truth is what I want, baron. Truth has made my paper famous!"

Menken nodded. He knew that the exact contrary had made the valiant editor's sheet a success.

Rahlou started when he saw who was with his employer. He scented mischief on the moment, for Herr Bergheim was a veritable tyrant in his little kingdom.

"Baron Von Menken desires a few words with you," said the publisher curtly. Rahlou bowed respectfully and turned toward Herr Von Menken, who had risen from his chair.

"You are the author of the article entitled, 'Society News,' in number 415 of the *Evening Journal*?" said the baron.

"I am, sir," returned Rahlou, assuming a defiant air.

"Were you aware, when you wrote it, that you were stating untruths?"

"I don't think they are untrue, Herr Von Menken. I received my information from authentic sources."

"Will you still believe your sources 'authentic,' when I tell you that the defamer of the Hackert family, Signor Cadama, was arrested two weeks ago, in San

Remo, for forgery and cheating. He escaped from the police, but was shot afterward in a quarrel with a friend. The *signor* was your chief source. Herbert von Hackert, another informant, was to have been arrested as an accomplice of Cadama's, but he managed to elude the police and has most likely fled to America."

The insolent smile faded from Rahlou's face as he listened to the baron's stern words. He grew a shade paler, but recovered himself in a moment, and said with affected carelessness :

"What you say is very interesting, but how am I to know that it is true?"

Menken's right hand trembled. He could hardly refrain from chastising the impertinent knave. But he told himself that to yield to the impulse would only demean his respectability; he said, therefore, in his usual tone :

"I can convince you before a court of justice, that what I say is true. As I have no further business here, I shall proceed at once to bring suit against—"

"Beg pardon, baron," here interposed the publisher, who had listened in silence to the foregoing conversation. "Beg pardon, but I fancy we can settle this matter without the aid of the law. I don't fear a legal procedure, but there is no need to carry the matter to such an extent. The fact is simply this : I believe *you*, baron, and I do not believe Herr Rahlou, who has got me into trouble more than once with his wild tales. Can you assure me, on your honor, baron, that the statements in the article in question are untrue?"

"I give you my word of honor, Herr Bergheim, that they are false from beginning to end."

"Thanks !"

Herr Bergheim bowed politely to the baron, then

turned toward Rahlou, whom he surveyed with a severe glance.

"What have you to say for yourself now, Herr Rahlou?"

"I can only show you the letter I received from Herbert von Hackert," answered the reporter. "I received my information from him. You must admit, Herr Bergheim, that I was justified in accepting as truthful the information I received from a person so intimately connected with the Hackert family?"

"I don't admit anything!" thundered the publisher in a voice that no one would have believed he possessed. "Since you have been in my employ, you have done nothing but get me into one scrape after another! I have no further use for such an assistant. Go to the cashier and ask him to give you a month's wages. You are dismissed!"

"Herr Bergheim!" ejaculated the now thoroughly frightened reporter, in so piteous an accent that even Menken felt a tinge of compassion for him. But Herr Bergheim was a stranger to compassion.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded roughly. "I am treating you far better than you deserve in giving you a month's pay instead of the usual week's warning."

"Allow me to say a word, Herr Bergheim," here interposed the baron, who was disgusted by the little tyrant's manner. "If you imagine that Herr Rahlou's dismissal will satisfy me, you are mistaken. I desire a denial of the scandalous article, and demand that I be allowed to dictate the denial."

Herr Bergheim lifted his hands in terror, exclaiming:

"For heaven's sake, baron, not another retraction! We have already corrected a similar statement, and we cannot—indeed, we cannot—retract a second time."

"Very good; then the courts must settle the matter," decisively replied Herr Von Menken, turning toward the door.

Herr Bergheim sprang excitedly to his feet, and placing himself in front of the baron, said, in a voice that trembled with mingled anger and desperation:

"But, my dear baron, you are at liberty to prosecute Rahlou as often as you please; he alone is to blame, and surely he ought to be the only one to suffer the consequences."

"Unfortunately, Rahlou is not the owner of the newspaper which published his scandalous article," returned the baron. "A retraction must appear in your journal—and if I have to call on the courts to force you to publish it."

Herr Bergheim tramped ferociously up and down the floor, took a large pinch of snuff from a heavily-gilded box and at last halted in front of the baron.

"I want to be rid of this disagreeable business," he said, in a lofty tone. "For that reason—and not because I am afraid of a law-suit—I assent to your request. Sit down there at the desk, Rahlou, and write what the baron dictates."

Rahlou breathed more freely. He seated himself with alacrity at the desk and took up a pen.

"Correction," dictated the baron distinctly and slowly: "We are extremely sorry—"

"'Very sorry' will do as well," interpolated Herr Bergheim.

"'Extremely sorry,'" repeated Menken decisively, "to be compelled to retract the statements made in the article entitled 'Society News' and published in number 415 of the journal, said statements being untruths—"

"'Mistakes' would sound better," again suggested Herr Bergheim.

“ ‘Untruths’ is the proper word,” responded the baron. Then he continued : “ ‘Further, we wish to add that the whole series of statements relating to the so-called burglary at Colonel Von Hackert’s residence, and appearing from time to time in these columns, were emanations from the fertile imagination of our reporter.’ ”

“But, my dear Herr Von Menken !” interrupted Herr Bergheim, wringing his hands in desperation, “such a retraction will be the journal’s death-sentence ! We shall lose our subscribers. All the world will ridicule us—the political party we uphold will select another organ ! We shall go to the dogs, baron, to the dogs !”

Menken took up his hat, and without noticing the publisher’s agitation, said :

“I shall expect to see the retraction, as I have dictated, in the journal to-morrow. If it does not appear you will hear at once from my lawyer. Good morning !”

As Menken closed the door behind him, he heard Herr Bergheim’s furious tones assail the reporter.

The baron had not yet breakfasted the next morning when Herr Rahlou was announced. He had brought the journal with the retraction.

“You will see, baron,” he said in a respectful tone, “that your instructions have been carried out to the letter. I must tell you, though, that I had a deal of trouble to induce Bergheim to let the retraction go to the printer as you dictated it, and that he refused to retain me in his service after bringing such a disgrace on his paper. I am now without the means to earn my bread, baron, and will not be likely to secure another position very soon. It is a terrible misfortune, baron. I have an aged mother dependent—”

Menken waved his hand rather impatiently. He had no desire to become acquainted with the reporter's private affairs.

"Let us come to the point at once, Herr Rahlou," he said curtly. "I can guess the object of your early visit. You want me to assist you. I shall do so willingly if you will do something for me—"

"Anything, anything in my power, baron," exclaimed the reporter, his face brightening.

"Very well. Sit down and listen to me. You are aware, I dare say, that my friend Waldau has been most maliciously slandered by his enemies. You need not pretend to be astonished, for you published several articles relating to the slanders in your paper. You and Eugene Blenkner are the originators of the plot against my friend—"

"Baron," interrupted Rahlou, affecting an injured air.

"You may as well admit it at once, Herr Rahlou," admitted the baron, "for I know what I am talking about. You will only injure your prospects by further dissimulation. I give you your choice between two alternatives: Be perfectly truthful toward me, and receive assistance from me, or continue to spread abroad your malicious slanders, and swear to them before a court of justice!"

Rahlou played nervously with the folded newspaper in his hand. He knew that Menken was a man of his word, and would carry out a threat as well as perform what he promised.

"I have chosen," he said, at last. "I will do what you require if you in turn will promise that I shall not be held responsible to the law, and if you will assist me to return to my old home, where I shall take up my former trade."

The baron opened a secret drawer in his writing-table, took from it two bank-notes, which he laid on the table.

“Here are two five-hundred-franc notes. They are yours as soon as you have truthfully informed me who originated the villainous plot against Waldau.”

Rahlou's face flushed; for a moment he seemed unable to speak. It was difficult, after all, to tell the truth! But the crisp rustle of the bank-notes sounded in his ear like the soothing whisper of a siren. He sighed unconsciously before he replied:

“I will make a clean breast of it, baron, come what may. You will pronounce me a rogue, but I shall have to bear your contempt. You force the confession from me. You know what cause I have to hate your friend Waldau, and why I wished to revenge myself on him. I wanted to get even with him for that insult in the Café Bauer. Blenkner, who, like myself, has a grudge against Waldau, joined forces with me, and together we concocted a scheme that—if worked successfully—would effectually ruin the art reputation of our common enemy. There is a dealer in antiques in B—— Street, an old Pole, who possesses the wonderful faculty of giving an ancient appearance to modern copies of the old masters, new tapestries, furniture, and so on. I became acquainted with old Gorczinsky—that is the Pole's name—in the police office. He had been arrested for cheating a customer, and begged me not to mention the affair in the newspaper. I promised not to do so, and the old fellow became my grateful slave. Blenkner made a clever copy of Waldau's ‘*Kerkerwonne*,’ we delivered it to Gorczinsky, who returned it to us in a few days looking thirty years older, and marked as the work of Terencz Rapoly, a Hungarian artist who died in 1867. The reputation of the Hungarian artist was of so little

importance that but few persons to-day remember him, or the style of his work. There is no need to tell you, baron, how we managed to hoodwink the art judges at the exhibition. That we were successful in making them believe Waldau's picture a plagiarism, you know. Are you satisfied with my confession?"

"I am," returned Menken rising, "but I must request you to remain my guest for two or three hours longer. My servant will serve breakfast for you, and my young friend and companion, Francisco Boccani, will bear you company during my absence. I give you my word that you shall be at liberty to depart—taking with you these banknotes—so soon as I return."

The baron thrust the notes into his pocket, flung his cloak around his shoulders, and left the room. He sought Francisco who was busily engaged packing two large trunks.

"What? Already preparing for our voyage?" smilingly exclaimed the baron. "I can imagine how eager you must be to try your pinions! But, I want you to do something for me, my dear boy; there is a man, or rather, a blackguard, Rahlou, of whom I have told you, in the salon. I want you to keep him company until I return, and see that he does not leave the room. I shall tell Janisch to be on guard to assist you in case you need him."

Francisco nodded understandingly, and Menken entered his carriage to drive to the police commissioner's. To Herr Von Holgen the baron communicated what he had heard from Rahlou, then he requested the commissioner to accompany him to the art exhibition.

"We will take one of the committee and Blenkner's picture with us to Gorczinsky's shop and settle this matter once for all!" he said as he stepped after Von Holgen into the carriage.

In the judge's room at the exhibition, they found the president and a friend of his, who proved to be an acquaintance of the baron's, and also of Waldau's, Herr Wyrenberg, the Viennese artist. The baron's errand was quickly explained, the alleged work of Terencz Rapoly's was brought forward, and the four men, with the picture, set out for the shop of the dealer in antiques.

Gorczyński was sitting amid a chaotic mass of lumber, musty and ill-smelling. He was deeply absorbed in his work, varnishing a tall screen decorated with Watteau pastoral scenes, and became visibly agitated when the commissioner introduced himself in his official capacity. He was so confused indeed, that he acknowledged at once his complicity in the Hungarian picture forgery, but strenuously denied that he had been told for what purpose the picture was painted.

"We shall prove the truth of your assertion later," coolly returned Von Holgen. "For the present I shall have to ask you to accompany me."

Amid a storm of protestations the dealer in antiques closed his shop and accompanied the commissioner to the police-bureau, while Herr Von Menken returned home to release Francisco from the unpleasant society of the reporter; who, with the baron's banknotes in his pocket, hastened at once to the railway station and took the first train for his former home in Silesia.

The same day Baron Von Menken sent a telegram to Counselor Dreyfuss, and received one from Waldau. The former read:

"Matters satisfactorily arranged."

The letter contained the announcement of Elimar's betrothal to Lucia.

Menken was sitting at his writing-table when Waldau's

message was handed to him. He read it, gazed fixedly for several seconds at the words, then folded his arms on the table and buried his face in them.

He sat thus for a long time, until Francisco opened the door. He started violently when the boy's gentle tones fell on his ear, and raised his head. He was deathly pale. There was a drawn look on his face, as if he were suffering intense agony.

"Cicco, my dear Cicco!" he murmured, rising and drawing the lad to his breast.

He passed his hand tenderly over the curly head resting against his shoulder, then bent and looked long and steadily into the lad's clear, shining eyes.

"Cicco," he said in a voice that trembled with emotion, "*you* will never leave me, will you, Cicco? Together, you and I will travel all over the world—together, bear the joy and sorrow that may come to us. I will be your father, and you shall be my dear son. I am a poor, lonely old man, and yearn for some one to love. You will love me in return, will you not, my boy? And you will stay with me so long as I shall live? Stay with me, so that I may look into the dearest eyes on earth until the last—until I close my own in death!"

He released the lad from his embrace, and, drawing himself to his full height—almost as if he were ashamed of having yielded to his emotion—added in a tone that sounded harsh in comparison to that in which he had been speaking:

"We must bestir ourselves, my boy. A steamer sails on the twelfth for Buenos Ayres. We shall have to start to Hamburg to-morrow."

"And not wait to see Herr Waldau again?" in a surprised tone asked the boy.

"And not wait to see Herr Waldau," repeated the baron.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two days later, when Herr Waldau arrived in Berlin, he was surprised not to find Herr Von Menken awaiting him, as usual, at the railway station. He drove to his own apartments, delivered his luggage to old Susanne, who was rejoiced to hear of her master's betrothal, then went on to Menken's residence.

Elimar's astonishment increased when he arrived at the baron's house, where he found everything in commotion. The double-entrance-doors stood wide open; porters were carrying furniture down the steps and loading it on drays. An active little man, with blue spectacles and crooked legs, with a greasy note-book in his hand, was skipping from one dray to another, making notes in his book and scolding the porters and draymen in a shrill voice. Hahneman, the old janitor, was standing at the door of his little office, looking with a melancholy face at the commotion about him. His eyes brightened when he saw Elimar spring from his carriage.

"Well, what do you say to this, Herr Waldau?" he called out, as the artist came toward him.

"What does it mean? Where is the baron?" breathlessly inquired Elimar.

Hahneman fixed his gaze on the weather-vane of a house on the opposite side of the street, raised his arm, and pointing in a westerly direction, said:

"Gone—sailed to the new world across the ocean! I never saw any one in such a hurry to get away. You may know, Herr Waldau, how eager he was to shake the dust of Berlin from his feet when I tell you that he left all his belongings to be disposed of by that little auctioneer yonder. The horses have been sold to Herr

Von Oechelhausen ; the carriages to Neuss. Janisch went with the baron. Only I and Franz and Kathi and Talbout, the cook, are left behind."

Elimar stared in bewilderment at the speaker.

"Gone?" he repeated, mechanically, as if stupefied by the unexpected intelligence. "Gone?" Then, suddenly realizing what had happened, he added, hastily: "Did he leave no message—no letter for me?"

Hahneman beat his hand against his forehead.

"Ah, yes!" he exclaimed. "I had almost forgotten! The baron gave me a letter for you. Come in, Herr Waldau. I shall have to hunt for it. I put it somewhere, and I declare I forget just what I did with it!"

Elimar entered the neat little apartment and seated himself to await, as patiently as he could, the result of the old janitor's search.

The letter, which was found after considerable trouble, was not a long one, but Elimar's eyes filled with tears as he read it:

"MY DEAR WALDAU—MY TRUE FRIEND: You will be offended at my quitting Europe without a last farewell—without a verbal congratulation on your betrothal. I cannot give you an excuse for leaving you so unceremoniously. My apology must be my irresistible desire to set out at once on my voyage to that portion of the world yet unknown to me. You will shake your head and not understand my strange whim, but I shall not see you. When you read these lines I shall be on the waves of the ocean. You are approaching a happy future, Elimar, and you deserve your happiness. You have a noble nature, a good, true heart, and I am convinced that Lucia will be happy with you. If I have feared until now that you might yield to the old listlessness, now I am satisfied that you will not. Lucia will be your good genius. Take good care of her, Elimar, and God bless you both!

"And now, in relation to business matters. I don't think you will have any more trouble with the art judges. The affair about your picture is satisfactorily settled. Rahlou and Blenkner were the originators of the plot against you. The former has left Berlin forever; the latter will be arrested for forgery. You will learn the particulars from the exhibition committee. You need

not thank me for attending to this matter for you. It was the last kindness I could do for you.

"Francisco sends his best love and heartiest greetings to you and to Lucia, as well as to our friends at San Remo. Letters will reach me if addressed to the consulate at Buenos Ayres.

"And now, farewell, Elimar. I embrace you in sincere friendship.

Yours,

"ATTOKAR."





## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THREE GRATULATIONS.

The Square of St. Marks in Venice was so crowded with people that there was hardly room for the small tables in front of the Café Florian. The May evening was charming, and the music by the bands on the garlanded *estrades* so enchanting that a goodly portion of the native population mingled with the crowd of tourists and foreigners on the Piazza. Those who were not seated at one of the tables in front of the *café* enjoying a "*gelato*," were promenading through the square, entranced by the changing and animated scenes about them.

An observing eye very soon learns to distinguish the different nationalities of the visitors to the square. The stiff, well-groomed Englishman, who is oblivious to everybody's comfort but his own, and the American, whose practical ideas and independence are manifested in every word and movement, are unmistakable. Armenians, Albanians, Istrians and Greeks are interesting appearances. The native type is almost submerged in the motley throng. Here and there, however, are to be seen the flower-girls, great pearls around their necks, false brilliants sparkling on their slender hands ; youth-

ful Slavs, with their boxes of almond comfits slung from their necks; venders of mussels and oysters; sellers of mosaics and spun-glass ornaments—and all the rest who are gathered in the square to ply their various trades.

At one of the little tables in front of the Café Florian sat a young couple, evidently one at heart and in thought, if not in nationality. While the young man's exterior plainly bespoke his German birth, his companion's dusky beauty, her luxuriant black hair, sparkling black eyes and brunette complexion, as plainly pronounced her a daughter of the South.

At a little distance apart from the table stood a gentleman, in whom we could at a glance recognize the Frenchman. The clear-cut profile, the beard *à la* Napoleon, were wholly French, and distinctively French the manner in which the *crème de rouge* was applied to the sunken cheeks to give them a youthful color.

The old Frenchman had halted suddenly on seeing the young couple at the table. He now approached, and, laying his hand on the German's shoulder, exclaimed :

"Monsieur Waldau, *vraiment* ! I thought I could not be mistaken. I knew I had seen this interesting head of yours somewhere !" He paused, and rested an inquiring glance on Lucia.

"My wife. Marquis Du Cat," rather curtly responded Waldau, evidently indisposed to enter into further conversation.

"If I mistake not," continued the marquis, gallantly acknowledging the introduction, "you are on your wedding tour? It was a charming idea to come to Venice—the crown of beauty! I dare say you have heard, Monsieur Waldau, that I am now a Venetian? I have taken up my abode in this city. I have for-

sworn the green-table, and am about to publish a *brochure* on the corrupting influence of the Casino at Monte Carlo. I love Venice. It suits me, and I shall live here until my savings are all spent. When they are all gone the Marquis Du Cat will be ready to make his *congé* and *après moi le déluge*! May I join you? I see there is a vacant seat."

"I should be delighted to chat longer with you, my dear marquis," returned Elimar, rising, "but we are invited to dine with a friend, and are on our way to his house. I hope you will excuse us."

Lucia understood her husband's significant glance, as well as the suddenly invented invitation to dinner, and rose also. A few more words were exchanged, then the young pair wandered arm in arm across the piazza.

"I am afraid we shall have to leave this charming spot of earth," observed Elimar, tenderly pressing the hand which rested on his arm. "We might encounter that living pack of cards oftener than would be agreeable to you. We must avoid everything that awakens old memories and live only for the present and the future."

"I am so grateful for your care of me, dearest," returned Lucia in a low tone. "I have forgotten my past sorrows in your love—not even the sight of that old professor of gaming recalled unpleasant memories. I look back on those past days as does the restored invalid on the days of fever and delirium. Besides, who could be sorrowful amid so much beauty?"

They had crossed St. Mark's Square, and now stood on the piazzetta opposite the Palazzo Ducale. The two granite columns facing the lagoon, which upheld the winged lions, threw gigantic shadows across the moonlit square, and the wavelets rippling against the marble staircase of the Riva, sang a song of the long ago.

A boat rocked on the shimmering water close to the steps ; the gondolier indolently reclining on the cushioned seat, sang in a clear tenor voice :

“ *Dormi pure, dormi felice,  
Dell' amor mia non scordar',  
Tu somigli 'ad una stella,  
Che dal cielo dicesse per me !  
Tu se' un angelo, seé la gioja  
Del matino la fresca rosa,  
Sei simpatica, sei vezzosa,  
Sei regina d'amor,  
Sei simpatica, sei vezzosa,  
Dormi pure !* ”

“ *Sei regina d'amour*—Queen of my love ! ” repeated Elimar, laying his arm around the slim waist of his young wife.

“ *Ecco, signor !* ” called the gondolier from his boat. “ Does *eccellenza* wish a gondola ? The *canal grande* is much finer by moonlight than in the daytime, and if *eccellenza* desires, I should sing my best in keeping time with the oars ! ”

The young pair stepped into the gondola and soon were gliding over the silvery water. They did not speak but sat side by side in silence and listened, too happy for speech, to the musical voice of their boatman. Like huge black giants the palaces swept past them on either side, the moon illumined the windows and peopled the weather-beaten walls with shadowy forms. Now and again they would pass by another gondola—a silent shadow, black and melancholy.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Two letters for the *signor* and a large package,” announced the porter of the Hotel d'Itali when Waldau and his wife returned from their sail in the moonlight.

Elimar shook his head at sight of the large box which was almost covered with foreign stamps. Then he took up the letters and examined the postmarks.

"San Remo," he said. "That is from Annie Doring. This one—I can't make out the stamp; I think it is American—is from Menken, and I dare say that box is from him, too."

The box was opened, with the assistance of a porter, and from the litter of straw, tissue-paper and other packing materials, appeared a superb table-service of silver.

"How very beautiful!" exclaimed Elimar, who was on his knees beside the box and surrounded by litter. "And that is not all, either—here is something else underneath this paper."

He lifted out a long ebony-box, with silver clasps; a tiny card dangled from the key, and bore the words:

"For the bride."

Elimar bowed gallantly and handed it to his wife:

"For you, my love; open it yourself. I might stumble on a secret to which I have no right."

Lucia opened the box, and the glittering object which met her eyes made her start. It was a costly gift, indeed—an agraffe of diamonds, in the center of which shimmered a single pearl, held by an eagle's talon.

Deeply moved, Lucia gazed on the brilliant ornament, seeing only the shimmering pearl, in which she recognized the fatal ornament that had made her mistrust her father's dearest friend. Almost reverently she lifted the agraffe from its satin cushion, and held it so the light might fall full upon the sparkling gems. She would wear it—wear it often—if only to compel her to think of the generous donor, whose unseen hand had guarded her so faithfully.

"And now for the letters, little wife," suggested Elimar, who had been enjoying Lucia's surprise and pleasure. "Come, let us sit by this cosy fire and I'll read them to you." He rolled an easy-chair in front of the merrily dancing flames, and seated himself on a footstool by her knee. "Menken's first," he said, tearing off the envelope, on which a second letter fell out. "From Francisco," he added, laying it aside to be read after the baron's.

Herr Von Menken wrote as follows :

"Hacienda Xeres Patusa,  
"February 1st.

"DEAR FRIENDS: Do not imagine that the intense heat of this South American climate has made me forgetful. I remembered the day which would see you united at the altar, and prepared the little gift, which I send you from this far-off country, with my best wishes and congratulations. Though I cannot be with you in person on the memorable day, I shall be with you in spirit—in spirit stretch out my hand across the waste of land and water and wish you every blessing that Heaven can bestow on its favored children.

"If, amid all your happiness, there should come a moment when you can give one thought to an absent friend, then think kindly of  
Yours always,

"ATTOKAR VON MENKEN."

For several moments after Elimar ceased reading. The silence was broken only by the crackling fire, on which rested two pairs of eyes that glistened with tears.

Then Elimar took up Francisco's letter. It was much longer than the baron's, and breathed contentment in every line. Cicco wrote enthusiastically about all the wonders he had seen on the voyage and in the strange new country, and expressed the deepest gratitude and reverence for his "second father." They were going—this was the baron's intention—to stop in

America until the autumn, then they would join a private scientific expedition to Africa. "The baron," so continued the lad, "has proven himself not only my liberator—he is my friend, teacher, father, and I pray daily that I may some time be able to repay the grandly noble man for his kindness and generosity to me." In conclusion, he added that they had encountered Herbert von Hackert while in Buenos Ayres. The student had assumed a different name and was occupying an inferior position in a business house, but the baron had used his influence to secure a better position for the young man in the office of a wealthy coffee merchant.

Elimar folded the letter and returned it to its envelope.

"Herbert is a Hackert-Selchern," he observed, musingly, "even though he did all in his power to disgrace the noble name. I dare say Menken thought of his old friend when he interested himself in the fellow to get him a situation that would be more suitable to his name. And now for the third letter. It is addressed to you, Lux."

"Only a few lines, my dear Lucia," wrote Annie Doring. "You know why I do not yield to my desire and send you a lengthy epistle. 'Tis the same 'reason' that prevented me from attending your wedding, and it is his shrieking with all the strength of his small lungs, in the cradle beside my bed. He is to be named Hans, after the older Hans, who is with us now, having won his laurels at the opening of the Tunnel. Just so soon as I am strong enough to travel, we shall return to Berlin, where Hans has been offered a profitable position in the Ministry of Public Works. Just now uncle came in to inquire after my health. He saw me writing, and of course ejaculated the usual 'Incredible!' Then he bade me give you his warmest greetings. Since the advent of the new citizen of the world aunt has become rejuvenated, and the kitchen has— But I must stop, for uncle threatens to take the pen from me. *Addio, Lux!* I repeat the gratulation I sent with uncle to your wedding. May you be as happy with your husband as I am with my dear Hans!"

The letter fell from Elimar's hand. He flung his arms around his wife, murmuring :

"Are we as happy, Lux—my own Lux?"

She bent her head to his shoulder, and with her cheek pressed against his, half sobbed her reply :

"Happier, my dearest, happier far!"

THE END.



# THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

A Novel.

BY

HONORE DE BALZAC,

*Author of "Cesar Birotteau," "The Alchemist," "Cousin Pons," "Eugenie Grandet," etc., etc.*

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY MRS. FRED. M. DEY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WARREN B. DAVIS.

12mo. 350 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

"The Country Doctor" is one of Balzac's greatest creations. It is the portrait of an ideal man in a situation where superior ability and knowledge enable him to raise a whole community to a higher level of morality, prosperity and intelligence. It is a study in social science far more valuable than dull treatises and histories of social experiments. It is full of human interest and feeling and that wonderful realism which makes all of Balzac's works like veritable stories of real life. The heroine is a creature of rare beauty and charm.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, post-paid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, New York

# THE LITTLE COUNTESS.

BY

E. VON DINCKLAGE,

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

By S. E. BOGGS.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WARREN B. DAVIE.*

12mo. 318 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

“The Little Countess” is a delightful novel. It is full of life and movement, and, in this respect, is superior to most translations from the German. It is distinctly a story to be read for pure enjoyment. The little countess belongs to an ancient and noble family. She is left an orphan in a lonely old castle, with a few servants and pets. Her heroic temper sustains her in every trial. The part played by an American girl in the story is very amusing, and shows what queer ideas are entertained of American women by some German novelists.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, New York.

**A New Novel by the Author of "A Priestess  
of Comedy."**

---

# A PRINCESS OF THE STAGE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

**NATALY VON ESCHSTRUTH,**

*Author of "A Priestess of Comedy," "Countess Dynar," etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

**12mo. 300 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.**

---

In this story the author gives us both tragedy and comedy. The romantic love affair of the chamberlain of the czar excites the most thrilling interest, involving as it does such tragic consequences. There is a delightfully amusing side to the story in the love affair of Lena's sister, and that of her hoydenish, noisy little country cousin and a young dandy. The character of the prince is exceedingly well drawn, and the transformation of the hoyden into a refined and elegant young lady is most charming. Nothing that has been published from the pen of the Baroness von Eschstruth is better than this story. The illustrations by Mr. Fagan are excellent. The book is beautifully bound in cloth as well as in paper covers.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

**ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.**

Julien Gordon's Novel from the German.

---

# COUNTESS OBERNAU.

AFTER THE GERMAN

BY

JULIEN GORDON,

*Author of "A Diplomat's Diary," etc., etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

12mo. 281 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

Julien Gordon's novels possess superb studies of character and fresh and unhackneyed incidents—merits which have rendered them popular. These qualities will also be found in "Countess Obernau," which she has adapted from the German, and which is quite equal to any of her books. Countess Obernau is a woman who possesses a rare charm of individuality. She has refinement and exquisite sensibilities joined to an artistic temperament. There is a mystery in her life, and her independent character and Bohemian tendencies invest all her movements with interest to curious observers. The charm of her individuality fascinates all, and at least two are ready to die for her. The interest of the novel is all centered in this character.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

**A New Novel by E. Werner.**

---

# A Lover From Across the Sea.

BY

**E. WERNER.**

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

**MARY J. SAFFORD.**

*ILLUSTRATIONS BY VICTOR PERARD AND H. M. EATON.*

**12mo. 300 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.**

---

E. Werner is the author of more popular novels than any other German writer. She has set the key for a good many of her sisters, who have made the German domestic love-story one of the most agreeable and familiar to American readers. These stories are always pure, interesting and popular. "A Lover from Across the Sea" is a fresh story, never before translated, and better adapted for republication here than any German novel which we can recall. It is one of the author's shorter novels, and the volume is enlarged by the addition of another new story by E. Werner, entitled "In the Hands of the Enemy," of the same general character and equally interesting. The illustrations of these stories add very much to the value and beauty of the book.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

**ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.**

A New Novel by the Author of "A Priestess  
of Comedy."

---

# COUNTESS DYNAR;

OR,

## POLISH BLOOD.

BY

NATALY VON ESCHSTRUTH,

*Author of "A Priestess of Comedy," "A Princess of the Stage,"  
etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

12mo. 367 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

Nataly von Eschstruth's novels are full of romantic sentiment that takes one completely out of the ordinary atmosphere and situations of common life. There are a swing to her style, a contagious enthusiasm and extravagance in her descriptions and a freshness in the emotions and passions of her characters, which command the attention, excite the feelings and absorb the interest of every reader. All who have read the "Priestess of Comedy" will appreciate the truth of what we say. "Countess Dynar" is a book of most unusual beauty. The illustrations are admirably illustrative of the scenes and characters.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

A Charming Novel.

---

# HEARTS AND CORONETS;

OR,

## WHO'S THE NOBLE?

BY

JANE G. FULLER.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR LUMLEY.*

12mo. 347 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

“Hearts and Coronets” is a novel in which rank and wealth are contrasted with the plainer elements of social life, and are shown to be no bar to truth, purity and affection. The plot is extremely good, and appeals strongly to every mother who has ever looked upon a lovely child in the cradle and considered the possibility of its being suddenly snatched away and its fate remaining for years a sealed book. There are possibilities in life more strange and surprising than any of the inventions of the novelist, and this story, like many others which strike the reader as improbable, is founded on fact. It is a deeply interesting narrative, with many delightful pictures of domestic life and woman's experience.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

# THE IMPROVISATORE; OR, LIFE IN ITALY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH OF

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

By MARY HOWITT.

*ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY C. EDWARDS.*

12mo. Bound in Cloth, \$1.00. Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

This is an entrancing romance dealing with the classic scenes of Italy. To those who desire to behold with their own eyes those scenes, it will create a fresh spring of sentiment, and fill them with unspeakable longing. To those who have visited the fair and memory-haunted towers and towns of Florence, Rome and Naples, it will revive their enthusiasm and refresh their knowledge. Andersen published this novel immediately after his return from Italy, and it created an extraordinary effect. Those who had depreciated the author's talent came forward voluntarily and offered him their homage. It is a work of such singular originality and beauty that no analysis or description could do it justice, and the universal admiration which it at once excited has caused it to be read and reread throughout the world.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, New York.

**A German Detective Novel.**

---

# THE TELL-TALE WATCH

(Der Lebende hat Recht.)

FROM THE GERMAN OF  
**GEORGE HÖCKER**

BY  
**META DE VERE.**

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.*

**12mo. 350 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00.**  
**Paper Cover, 50 Cents.**

---

This story is based upon a thrilling tragedy in real life, which created a sensation in Germany, and which in the form of a novel is equally thrilling and interesting. German novels are usually quiet and domestic, and while interesting and charming, are seldom exciting or dramatic. "The Tell-Tale Watch" is both, and will satisfy the taste for a mystery which, in the beginning, seems almost unfathomable. It is a strange story with an original plot, and one which will cause difference of opinion, as the sympathy of the reader is excited in favor of one character or another. It is not a story which any one who reads will consider dull.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

**ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.**

A War Novel.

---

# THE GUN-BEARER.

BY

EDWARD A. ROBINSON

AND

GEORGE A. WALL,

*Authors of "The Disk," etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

12mo. 276 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

A new and thrilling war novel of intense interest, narrating the experiences of a *private soldier* whose regiment joins Sherman's army at Buzzard's Roost, and shares the fortunes of that army, participating in all the engagements up to the fall of Atlanta. Thence with General Schofield's command, pursued by General Hood into Tennessee, contesting the ground foot by foot, the regiment finally joins General Thomas at Nashville. The story culminates with the desperate battle of Franklin, where General Schofield, with ten thousand men, wrestled with General Hood and three times as many Confederates. Vivid descriptions of soldier life in camp, on the march, in bivouac, on picket, in skirmish and in battle, sustain the interest and hold the reader's attention to the end.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,.

COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

**A Fresh Novel From the German.**

---

# WOOING A WIDOW.

FROM THE GERMAN OF  
EWALD AUGUST KOENIG.

BY  
MARY A. ROBINSON,  
*Translator of "A Child of the Parish," etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

12mo. 380 Pages. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.25.  
Paper Cover, 50 Cents.

---

Koenig is one of the most popular novelists of Germany, and "Wooing a Widow" is his best work. The widow in the story has more than one wooer, and there is great uncertainty as to the one ultimately to win and wed her. It is an exciting story, with a succession of interesting incidents in the working-out of an excellent plot. It is rare that we find a story from the German so well planned and so delightfully carried out. It can be read at one sitting without any feeling of fatigue, as the story is interesting from beginning to end.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.

**Mrs. Southworth's Best Novels,**

---

**ONLY A GIRL'S HEART,**

BY

**MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.**

---

**THE REJECTED BRIDE,**

Being "Only a Girl's Heart," Second Series.

---

**GERTRUDE HADDON,**

Being "Only a Girl's Heart," Third Series.

---

BY

**MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH,**

*ALL THREE ILLUSTRATED BY HUGH M. EATON.*

**12mo. Handsomely Bound in Cloth. Price, \$1.00 each. Paper Cover, 50 Cents.**

---

The three novels above named are all connected by a thread of story and deal with the same characters. The series reads continuously and is essentially one novel, although each book forms more or less a distinct narrative. The interest of the first novel is carried forward with increasing power until the close of the third. Few authors, living or dead, have swayed so wide an influence or held readers with a more sovereign power than this delightful novelist. Many readers are gratified to meet their old acquaintances in the successive books of a favorite author. F. Marion Crawford owes a great deal of his popularity to the Roman family of the Saracinesca, whose fortunes in succeeding generations are told in his novels. So this series by Mrs. Southworth will furnish a whole winter's reading to her admirers, and all about the same people. The illustrations of these novels add very much to their beauty and interest.

For sale by all booksellers and newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

**ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,  
COR. WILLIAM AND SPRUCE STREETS, NEW YORK.**

# THE LEDGER LIBRARY.

NO. AND TITLE.

AUTHOR.

CLOTH. PAPER.

1—Her Double Life.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	\$1.00	50 cts
2—Unknown.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
3—The Gunmaker of Moscow.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	1.00	25
4—Maud Morton.....	Major A. R. Calhoun.....	1.00	50
5—The Hidden Hand.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
6—Sundered Hearts.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
7—The Stone-Cutter of Lisbon.....	Prof. Wm. Henry Peck.....	1.00	50
8—Lady Kildare.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
9—Cris Rock.....	Captain Mayne Reid.....	1.00	50
10—Nearest and Dearest.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
11—The Bailiff's Scheme.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
12—A Leap in the Dark.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
13—Henry M. Stanley.....	Henry Frederick Reddall.....	1.00	50
14—The Old Life's Shadows.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
15—A Mad Betrothal.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	1.00	50
16—The Lost Lady of Lone.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
17—Ione.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	1.00	50
18—For Woman's Love.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
19—Cesar Birotteau.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
20—The Baroness Blank.....	August Niemann.....	1.00	50
21—Parted by Fate.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	1.00	50
22—The Forsaken Inn.....	Anna Katharine Green.....	1.50	50
23—Ottillie Aster's Silence.....	Mrs. D. M. Lowrey.....	1.00	50
24—Edda's Birthright.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
25—The Alchemist.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
26—Under Oath.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	1.00	50
27—Cousin Pons.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
28—The Unloved Wife.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
29—Lilith.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50
30—Reunited.....	A Popular Southern Author.....	1.00	50
31—Mrs. Harold Stagg.....	Robert Grant.....	1.00	50
32—The Breach of Custom.....	Mrs. D. M. Lowrey. (Translator).....	1.00	50
33—The Northern Light.....	E. Werner.....	1.00	50
34—Beryl's Husband.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
35—A Love Match.....	Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.....	1.00	50
36—A Matter of Millions.....	Anna Katharine Green.....	1.50	50
37—Eugenie Grandet.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
38—The Improvisatore.....	Hans Christian Andersen.....	1.00	50
39—Paoli, the Warrior Bishop.....	W. C. Kitchin.....	1.00	50
40—Under a Cloud.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	1.00	50
41—Wife and Woman.....	Mary J. Safford.....	1.00	50
42—An Insignificant Woman.....	W. Heimburg.....	1.00	50
43—The Carletons.....	Robert Grant.....	1.00	50
44—Mademoiselle Desroches.....	Andre Theuriot.....	1.00	50
45—The Beads of Tasmer.....	Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.....	1.25	50
46—John Winthrop's Defeat.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	1.00	50
47—Little Heather-Blossom.....	Mary J. Safford. (Translator).....	1.00	50
48—Gloria.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
49—David Lindsay.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50
50—The Little Countess.....	S. E. Boggs. (Translator).....	1.00	50
51—The Chautauquans.....	John Habberton.....	1.25	50
52—The Two Husbands.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
53—Mrs. Barr's Short Stories.....	Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.....	1.25	50
54—We Parted at the Altar.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	1.00	50
55—Was She Wife or Widow?.....	Malcolm Bell.....	1.00	50
56—The Country Doctor.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
57—Florabel's Lover.....	Laura Jean Libbey.....	1.00	50
58—Lida Campbell.....	Jean Kate Ludlum.....	1.00	50
59—Edith Trevor's Secret.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
60—Cecil Rosse.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50
61—Love is Lord of All.....	From the German.....	1.00	50
62—True Daughter of Hartenstein.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50
63—Zina's Awakening.....	Mrs. J. Kent Spender.....	1.00	50
64—Morris Julian's Wife.....	Elizabeth Olmis.....	1.00	50
65—Dear Elsie.....	From the German.....	1.00	50
66—The Hungarian Girl.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50
67—Beatrice Rohan.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
68—A Son of Old Harry.....	Albion W Tourgee.....	1.50	50
69—Romance of Trouville.....	Brehat.....	1.00	50
70—Life of General Jackson.....	Oliver Dyer.....	1.00	50
71—The Return of the O'Mahony.....	Harold Frederic.....	1.50	50
72—Reuben Foreman, the Village Blacksmith.....	Darley Dale.....	1.00	50
73—Neva's Three Lovers.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
74—“Em”.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
75—“Em's” Husband.....	“ “ “.....	1.00	50

# THE LEDGER LIBRARY==Continued.

NO. AND TITLE.

AUTHOR

CLOTH. PAPER.

76—The Haunted Husband.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
77—The Siberian Exiles.....	Col. Thomas W. Knox.....	2.00	50
78—The Spanish Treasure.....	Elizabeth C. Winter.....	1.00	50
79—The King of Honey Island.....	Maurice Thompson.....	1.50	50
80—Mate of the "Easter Bell".....	Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.....	1.25	50
81—The Child of the Parish.....	Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.....	1.00	50
82—Miss Mischief.....	W. Heimbürg.....	1.50	50
83—The Honor of a Heart.....	From the German.....	1.00	50
84—Transgressing the Law.....	Capt. Frederick Whittaker.....	1.00	50
85—Hearts and Coronets.....	Jane G. Fuller.....	1.00	50
86—Tressilian Court.....	Mrs. Harriet Lewis.....	1.00	50
87—Guy Tressilian's Fate.....	" " ".....	1.00	50
88—Mynheer Joe.....	St. George Rathborne.....	1.00	50
89—The Froler Case.....	From the French by H. O. Cooke.....	1.00	50
90—A Priestess of Comedy.....	Nataly von Eschstruth.....	1.25	50
91—All or Nothing.....	Count Nepomuk Czapski.....	1.25	50
92—A Skeleton in the Closet.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
93—Brandon Coyle's Wife.....	" " ".....	1.00	50
94—Love.....	Honore De Balzac.....	1.00	50
95—The Tell-Tale Watch.....	From the German.....	1.00	50
96—Hetty; or the Old Grudge.....	J. H. Connelly.....	1.00	50
97—Girls of a Feather.....	Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.....	1.25	50
98—Appassionata.....	Elsa D'Esterre-Keeling.....	1.25	50
99—Only a Girl's Heart.....	Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.....	1.00	50
100—The Rejected Bride.....	" " ".....	1.00	50
101—Gertrude Haddon.....	" " ".....	1.00	50
102—Countess Dynar, or Polish Blood.....	Nataly von Eschstruth.....	1.25	50
103—A Sleep-Walker.....	Paul H. Gerrard.....	1.00	50
104—A Lover From Across the Sea and Other Stories.....	E. Werner.....	1.00	50
105—A Princess of the Stage.....	Nataly von Eschstruth.....	1.25	50
106—Countess Obernau.....	Julien Gordon.....	1.25	50
107—The Gun-Bearer.....	E. A. Robinson and G. A. Wall.....	1.25	50
108—Wooing a Widow.....	Ewald August Koenig.....	1.25	50
109—Her Little Highness.....	Nataly von Eschstruth.....	1.25	50
110—In the China Sea.....	Seward W. Hopkins.....	1.00	50
111—Invisible Hands.....	F. von Zobeltitz.....	1.25	50

Every Number Beautifully Illustrated.

For sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers, or sent post paid on receipt of price by

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS,

PUBLISHERS,

Cor. William and Spruce Streets, New York City

612



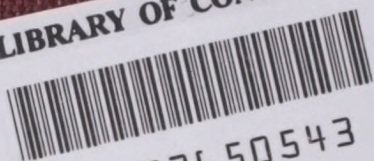








LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022650543

